

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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NO NAME.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," &c.

CHAPTER VI.

ALL human penetration has its limits. Accurately as Captain Wragg had seen his way hitherto, even his sharp insight was now at fault. He finished his cigar with the mortifying conviction that he was totally unprepared for Mrs. Lecount's next proceeding.

In this emergency, his experience warned him that there was one safe course, and one only, which he could take. He resolved to try the confusing effect on the housekeeper of a complete change of tactics, before she had time to press her advantage, and attack him in the dark. With this view he sent the servant up-stairs to request that Miss Bygrave would come down and speak to him.

"I hope I don't disturb you," said the captain, when Magdalen entered the room. "Allow me to apologise for the smell of tobacco, and to say two words on the subject of our next proceedings. To put it with my customary frankness, Mrs. Lecount puzzles me, and I propose to return the compliment by puzzling her. The course of action which I have to suggest is a very simple one. I have had the honour of giving you a severe neuralgic attack already, and I beg your permission (when Mr. Noel Vanstone sends to inquire to-morrow morning) to take the further liberty of laying you up altogether. Question from Sea-View Cottage: 'How is Miss Bygrave this morning?' Answer from North Shingles: 'Much worse; Miss Bygrave is confined to her room.' Question repeated every day, say for a fortnight: 'How is Miss Bygrave?' Answer repeated, if necessary, for the same time: 'No better.' Can you bear the imprisonment? I see no objection to your getting a breath of fresh air the first thing in the morning, or the last thing at night. But for the whole of the day, there is no disguising it, you must put yourself in the same category with Mrs. Wragge—you must keep your room."

"What is your object in wishing me to do this?" inquired Magdalen.

"My object is twofold," replied the captain. "I blush for my own stupidity; but the fact is, I can't see my way plainly to Mrs. Lecount's

next move. All I feel sure of is, that she means to make another attempt at opening her master's eyes to the truth. Whatever means she may employ to discover your identity, personal communication with you *must* be necessary to the accomplishment of her object. Very good. If I stop that communication, I put an obstacle in her way at starting—or, as we say at cards, I force her hand. Do you see the point?"

Magdalen saw it plainly. The captain went on.

"My second reason for shutting you up," he said, "refers entirely to Mrs. Lecount's master. The growth of love, my dear girl, is, in one respect, unlike all other growths—it flourishes under adverse circumstances. Our first course of action is to make Mr. Noel Vanstone feel the charm of your society. Our next, is to drive him distracted by the loss of it. I should have proposed a few more meetings, with a view to furthering this end, but for our present critical position towards Mrs. Lecount. As it is, we must trust to the effect you produced yesterday, and try the experiment of a sudden separation rather sooner than I could have otherwise wished. I shall see Mr. Noel Vanstone, though you don't—and if there is a raw place established anywhere about the region of that gentleman's heart, trust me to hit him on it! You are now in full possession of my views. Take your time to consider, and give me your answer—Yes or No."

"Any change is for the better," said Magdalen, "which keeps me out of the company of Mrs. Lecount and her master! Let it be as you wish."

She had hitherto answered faintly and wearily; but she spoke those last words with a heightened tone, and a rising colour—signs which warned Captain Wragge not to press her farther.

"Very good," said the captain. "As usual, we understand each other. I see you are tired; and I won't detain you any longer."

He rose to open the door, stopped half way to it, and came back again. "Leave me to arrange matters with the servant down stairs," he continued. "You can't absolutely keep your bed; and we must purchase the girl's discretion when she answers the door—without taking her into our confidence, of course. I will make her understand that she is to say you are ill, just as she might say you are not at home, as a way of keeping unwelcome acquaintances out of the house."

Allow me to open the door for you.—I beg your pardon, you are going into Mrs. Wragge's work-room, instead of going to your own."

"I know I am," said Magdalen. "I wish to remove Mrs. Wragge from the worst room in the house, and to take her up-stairs with me."

"For the evening?"

"For the whole fortnight."

Captain Wragge followed her into the dining-room, and wisely closed the door before he spoke again.

"Do you seriously mean to inflict my wife's society on yourself, for a fortnight?" he asked, in great surprise.

"Your wife is the only innocent creature in this guilty house," she burst out vehemently. "I must and will have her with me!"

"Pray don't agitate yourself," said the captain. "Take Mrs. Wragge by all means. I don't want her." Having resigned the partner of his existence in those terms, he discreetly returned to the parlour. "The weakness of the sex!" thought the captain, tapping his sagacious head. "Lay a strain on the female intellect—and the female temper gives way directly."

The strain to which the captain alluded, was not confined, that evening, to the female intellect at North Shingles: it extended to the female intellect at Sea View. For nearly two hours, Mrs. Lecount sat at her desk, writing, correcting, and writing again, before she could produce a letter to Miss Vanstone the elder, which exactly accomplished the object she wanted to attain. At last, the rough draft was completed to her satisfaction; and she made a fair copy of it, forthwith, to be posted the next day.

Her letter thus produced, was a masterpiece of ingenuity. After the first preliminary sentences, the housekeeper plainly informed Norah of the appearance of the visitor in disguise at Vauxhall Walk; of the conversation which passed at the interview; and of her own suspicion that the person claiming to be Miss Garth was, in all probability, the younger Miss Vanstone herself. Having told the truth, thus far, Mrs. Lecount next proceeded to say, that her master was in possession of evidence which would justify him in putting the law in force; that he knew the conspiracy with which he was threatened to be then in process of direction against him at Aldborough; and that he only hesitated to protect himself, in deference to family considerations, and in the hope that the elder Miss Vanstone might so influence her sister, as to render it unnecessary to proceed to extremities.

Under these circumstances (the letter continued) it was plainly necessary that the disguised visitor to Vauxhall Walk should be properly identified—for if Mrs. Lecount's guess proved to be wrong, and if the person turned out to be a stranger, Mr. Noel Vanstone was positively resolved to prosecute in his own defence. Events at Aldborough, on which it was not necessary to dwell, would enable Mrs. Lecount

in a few days to gain sight of the suspected person, in her own character. But as the housekeeper was entirely unacquainted with the younger Miss Vanstone, it was obviously desirable that some better informed person should, in this particular, take the matter in hand. If the elder Miss Vanstone happened to be at liberty to come to Aldborough herself, would she kindly write and say so?—and Mrs. Lecount would write back again to appoint a day. If, on the other hand, Miss Vanstone was prevented from taking the journey, Mrs. Lecount suggested that her reply should contain the fullest description of her sister's personal appearance—should mention any little peculiarities which might exist in the way of marks on her face or her hands—and should state (in case she had written lately) what the address was in her last letter, and failing that, what the postmark was on the envelope. With this information to help her, Mrs. Lecount would, in the interest of the misguided young lady herself, accept the responsibility of privately identifying her; and would write back immediately to acquaint the elder Miss Vanstone with the result.

The difficulty of sending this letter to the right address gave Mrs. Lecount very little trouble. Remembering the name of the lawyer who had pleaded the cause of the two sisters, in Michael Vanstone's time, she directed her letter to "Miss Vanstone, care of — Pendril, Esquire, London." This she enclosed in a second envelope, addressed to Mr. Noel Vanstone's solicitor, with a line inside, requesting that gentleman to send it at once to the office of Mr. Pendril.

"Now," thought Mrs. Lecount, as she locked the letter up in her desk, preparatory to posting it the next day, with her own hand; "now, I have got her!"

The next morning, the servant from Sea View came, with her master's compliments, to make inquiries after Miss Bygrave's health. Captain Wragge's bulletin was duly announced—Miss Bygrave was so ill, as to be confined to her room.

On the reception of this intelligence, Mr. Noel Vanstone's anxiety led him to call at North Shingles himself, when he went out for his afternoon walk. Miss Bygrave was no better. He inquired, if he could see Mr. Bygrave. The wary captain was prepared to meet this emergency. He thought a little irritating suspense would do Mr. Noel Vanstone no harm; and he had carefully charged the servant, in case of necessity, with her answer:—"Mr. Bygrave begged to be excused; he was not able to see any one."

On the second day, inquiries were made as before, by message in the morning, and by Mr. Noel Vanstone himself in the afternoon. The morning answer relating to Magdalen was, "A shade better." The afternoon answer (relating to Captain Wragge) was, "Mr. Bygrave has just gone out." That evening, Mr. Noel Vanstone's temper was very uncertain; and Mrs. Lecount's

patience and tact were sorely tried in the effort to avoid offending him.

On the third morning, the report of the suffering young lady was less favourable—"Miss Bygrave was still very poorly, and not able to leave her bed." The servant, returning to Sea View with this message, met the postman, and took into the breakfast-room with her two letters addressed to Mrs. Lecount.

The first letter was in a handwriting familiar to the housekeeper. It was from the medical attendant on her invalid brother at Zurich; and it announced that the patient's malady had latterly altered in so marked a manner for the better, that there was every hope now of preserving his life.

The address on the second letter was in a strange handwriting. Mrs. Lecount, concluding that it was the answer from Miss Vanstone, waited to read it until breakfast was over, and she could retire to her own room.

She opened the letter, looked at once for the name at the end, and started a little as she read it. The signature was not "Norah Vanstone," but "Harriet Garth."

Miss Garth's letter announced that the elder Miss Vanstone had, a week since, accepted an engagement as governess—subject to the condition of joining the family of her employer at their temporary residence in the south of France, and of returning with them when they came back to England, probably in a month or six weeks' time. During the interval of this necessary absence, Miss Vanstone had requested Miss Garth to open all her letters; her main object in making that arrangement being to provide for the speedy answering of any communication which might arrive for her from her sister. Miss Magdalen Vanstone had not written since the middle of July—on which occasion the post-mark on the letter showed that it must have been posted in London, in the district of Lambeth—and her elder sister had left England in a state of the most distressing anxiety on her account.

Having completed this explanation, Miss Garth then mentioned that family circumstances prevented her from travelling personally to Aldborough to assist Mrs. Lecount's object—but that she was provided with a substitute, in every way fitter for the purpose, in the person of Mr. Pendril. That gentleman was well acquainted with Miss Magdalen Vanstone; and his professional experience and discretion would render his assistance doubly valuable. He had kindly consented to travel to Aldborough whenever it might be thought necessary. But, as his time was very valuable, Miss Garth specially requested that he might not be sent for, until Mrs. Lecount was quite sure of the day on which his services might be required.

While proposing this arrangement, Miss Garth added that she thought it right to furnish her correspondent with a written description of the younger Miss Vanstone, as well. An emergency

might happen which would allow Mrs. Lecount no time for securing Mr. Pendril's services; and the execution of Mr. Noel Vanstone's intentions towards the unhappy girl who was the object of his forbearance, might be fatally delayed by an unforeseen difficulty in establishing her identity. The personal description, transmitted under these circumstances, then followed. It omitted no personal peculiarity by which Magdalen could be recognised; and it included the "two little moles close together on the left side of the neck," which had been formerly mentioned in the printed handbills sent to York.

In conclusion, Miss Garth expressed her fears that Mrs. Lecount's suspicions were only too likely to be proved true. While, however, there was the faintest chance that the conspiracy might turn out to be directed by a stranger, Miss Garth felt bound in gratitude towards Mr. Noel Vanstone, to assist the legal proceedings which would, in that case, be instituted. She accordingly appended her own formal denial—which she would personally repeat, if necessary—of any identity between herself and the person in disguise who had made use of her name. She was the Miss Garth who had filled the situation of the late Mr. Andrew Vanstone's governess; and she had never in her life been in, or near, the neighbourhood of Vauxhall Walk.

With this disclaimer—and with the writer's fervent assurances that she would do all for Magdalen's advantage which her sister might have done, if her sister had been in England—the letter concluded. It was signed in full, and was dated with the business-like accuracy in such matters which had always distinguished Miss Garth's character.

This letter placed a formidable weapon in the housekeeper's hands.

It provided a means of establishing Miss Bygrave's identity through the intervention of a lawyer by profession. It contained a personal description minute enough to be used to advantage, if necessary, before Mr. Pendril's appearance. It presented a signed exposure of the false Miss Garth, under the hand of the true Miss Garth; and it established the fact, that the last letter received by the elder Miss Vanstone from the younger, had been posted (and therefore probably written) in the neighbourhood of Vauxhall Walk. If any later letter had been received, with the Aldborough post-mark, the chain of evidence, so far as the question of localities was concerned, might doubtless have been more complete. But, as it was, there was testimony enough (aided as that testimony might be, by the fragment of the brown alpaca dress still in Mrs. Lecount's possession) to raise the veil which hung over the conspiracy, and to place Mr. Noel Vanstone face to face with the plain and startling truth.

The one obstacle which now stood in the way of immediate action on the housekeeper's part, was the obstacle of Miss Bygrave's present se-

clusion within the limits of her own room. The question of gaining personal access to her, was a question which must be decided before any communication could be opened with Mr. Pendril. Mrs. Lecount put on her bonnet at once, and called at North Shingles to try what discoveries she could make for herself, before post-time.

On this occasion, Mr. Bygrave was at home; and she was admitted without the least difficulty.

Careful consideration that morning, had decided Captain Wragge on advancing matters a little nearer to the crisis. The means by which he proposed achieving this result, made it necessary for him to see the housekeeper and her master separately, and to set them at variance by producing two totally opposite impressions relating to himself, on their minds. Mrs. Lecount's visit, therefore, instead of causing him any embarrassment, was the most welcome occurrence he could have wished for. He received her in the parlour, with a marked restraint of manner, for which she was quite unprepared. His ingratiating smile was gone, and an impenetrable solemnity of countenance appeared in its stead.

"I have ventured to intrude on you, sir," said Mrs. Lecount, "to express the regret with which both my master and I have heard of Miss Bygrave's illness. Is there no improvement?"

"No, ma'am," replied the captain, as briefly as possible. "My niece is no better."

"I have had some experience, Mr. Bygrave, in nursing. If I could be of any use——"

"Thank you, Mrs. Lecount. There is no necessity for our taking advantage of your kindness."

This plain answer was followed by a moment's silence. The housekeeper felt some little perplexity. What had become of Mr. Bygrave's elaborate courtesy, and Mr. Bygrave's many words? Did he want to offend her? If he did, Mrs. Lecount then and there determined that he should not gain his object.

"May I inquire the nature of the illness?" she persisted. "It is not connected, I hope, with our excursion to Dunwich?"

"I regret to say, ma'am," replied the captain, "it began with that neuralgic attack in the carriage."

"So! so!" thought Mrs. Lecount. "He doesn't even *try* to make me think the illness a real one; he throws off the mask, at starting!—Is it a nervous illness, sir?" she added, aloud.

The captain answered by a solemn affirmative inclination of the head.

"Then you have *two* nervous sufferers in the house, Mr. Bygrave?"

"Yes, ma'am—two. My wife and my niece."

"That is rather a strange coincidence of misfortunes."

"It is, ma'am. Very strange."

In spite of Mrs. Lecount's resolution not to be offended, Captain Wragge's exasperating insensibility to every stroke she aimed at him began to ruffle her. She was conscious of some little difficulty in securing her self-possession, before she could say anything more.

"Is there no immediate hope," she resumed, "of Miss Bygrave being able to leave her room?"

"None whatever, ma'am."

"You are satisfied, I suppose, with the medical attendance?"

"I have no medical attendance," said the captain, composedly. "I watch the case myself."

The gathering venom in Mrs. Lecount swelled up at that reply, and overflowed at her lips.

"Your smattering of science, sir," she said, with a malicious smile, "includes, I presume, a smattering of medicine as well?"

"It does, ma'am," answered the captain, without the slightest disturbance of face or manner.

"I know as much of one as I do of the other."

The tone in which he spoke those words, left Mrs. Lecount but one dignified alternative. She rose to terminate the interview. The temptation of the moment proved too much for her; and she could not resist casting the shadow of a threat over Captain Wragge at parting.

"I defer thanking you, sir, for the manner in which you have received me," she said, "until I can pay my debt of obligation to some purpose. In the mean time, I am glad to infer, from the absence of a medical attendant in the house, that Miss Bygrave's illness is much less serious than I had supposed it to be when I came here."

"I never contradict a lady, ma'am," rejoined the incorrigible captain. "If it is your pleasure, when we next meet, to think my niece quite well, I shall bow resignedly to the expression of your opinion." With those words, he followed the housekeeper into the passage, and politely opened the door for her. "I mark the trick, ma'am!" he said to himself, as he closed it again. "The trump-card in your hand, is a sight of my niece; and I'll take care you don't play it!"

He returned to the parlour, and composedly awaited the next event which was likely to happen—a visit from Mrs. Lecount's master. In less than an hour, results justified Captain Wragge's anticipations; and Mr. Noel Vanstone walked in.

"My dear sir!" cried the captain, cordially seizing his visitor's reluctant hand, "I know what you have come for. Mrs. Lecount has told you of her visit here, and has no doubt declared that my niece's illness is a mere subterfuge. You feel surprised, you feel hurt—you suspect me of trifling with your kind sympathies—in short, you require an explanation. That explanation you shall have. Take a seat, Mr. Vanstone. I am about to throw myself on your sense and judgment as a man of the world. I acknowledge that we are in a false position, sir; and I tell you plainly at the outset—your housekeeper is the cause of it."

For once in his life, Mr. Noel Vanstone opened his eyes. "Lecount!" he exclaimed, in the utmost bewilderment.

"The same, sir," replied Captain Wragge. "I am afraid I offended Mrs. Lecount, when she came here this morning, by a want of cordiality in my manner. I am a plain man; and I can't assume

what I don't feel. Far be it from me to breathe a word against your housekeeper's character. She is, no doubt, a most excellent and trustworthy woman; but she has one serious failing common to persons at her time of life who occupy her situation—she is jealous of her influence over her master, although you may not have observed it."

"I beg your pardon," interposed Mr. Noel Vanstone; "my observation is remarkably quick. Nothing escapes it."

"In that case, sir," resumed the captain, "you cannot fail to have noticed that Mrs. Lecount has allowed her jealousy to affect her conduct towards my niece?"

Mr. Noel Vanstone thought of the domestic passage at arms between Mrs. Lecount and himself, when his guests of the evening had left Sea View, and failed to see his way to any direct reply. He expressed the utmost surprise and distress—he thought Lecount had done her best to be agreeable on the drive to Dunwich—he hoped and trusted there was some unfortunate mistake.

"Do you mean to say, sir," pursued the captain, severely, "that you have not noticed the circumstance yourself. As a man of honour, and a man of observation, you can't tell me that! Your housekeeper's superficial civility has not hidden your housekeeper's real feeling. My niece has seen it, and so have you, and so have I. My niece, Mr. Vanstone, is a sensitive, high-spirited girl; and she has positively declined to cultivate Mrs. Lecount's society, for the future. Don't misunderstand me! To my niece, as well as to myself, the attraction of *your* society, Mr. Vanstone, remains the same. Miss Bygrave simply declines to be an apple of discord (if you will permit the classical allusion?) cast into your household. I think she is right, so far; and I frankly confess that I have exaggerated a nervous indisposition, from which she is really suffering, into a serious illness—purely and entirely to prevent these two ladies, for the present, from meeting every day on the parade, and from carrying unpleasant impressions of each other into your domestic establishment and mine."

"I allow nothing unpleasant in *my* establishment," remarked Mr. Noel Vanstone. "I'm master—you must have noticed that already, Mr. Bygrave?—I'm master."

"No doubt of it, my dear sir. But to live morning, noon, and night, in the perpetual exercise of your authority, is more like the life of a governor of a prison than the life of a master of a household. The wear and tear—consider the wear and tear."

"It strikes you in that light, does it?" said Mr. Noel Vanstone, soothed by Captain Wragge's ready recognition of his authority. "I don't know that you're not right. But I must take some steps directly. I won't be made ridiculous—I'll send Lecount away altogether, sooner than be made ridiculous." His colour rose; and he folded his little arms fiercely. Captain Wragge's artfully-irritating explanation had awakened that

dormant suspicion of his housekeeper's influence over him, which habitually lay hidden in his mind; and which Mrs. Lecount was now not present to charm back to repose as usual. "What must Miss Bygrave think of me!" he exclaimed, with a sudden outburst of vexation. "I'll send Lecount away—damme, I'll send Lecount away on the spot!"

"No, no, no!" said the captain, whose interest it was to avoid driving Mrs. Lecount to any desperate extremities. "Why take strong measures, when mild measures will do? Mrs. Lecount is an old servant; Mrs. Lecount is attached and useful. She has this little drawback of jealousy—jealousy of her domestic position with her bachelor master. She sees you paying courteous attention to a handsome young lady; she sees that young lady properly sensible of your politeness—and, poor soul, she loses her temper! What is the obvious remedy? Humour her—make a manly concession to the weaker sex. If Mrs. Lecount is with you, the next time we meet on the parade, walk the other way. If Mrs. Lecount is not with you, give us the pleasure of your company by all means. In short, my dear sir, try the *suoaviter in modo* (as we classical men say), before you commit yourself to the *fortiter in re*!"

There was one excellent reason why Mr. Noel Vanstone should take Captain Wragge's conciliatory advice. An open rupture with Mrs. Lecount—even if he could have summoned the courage to face it—would imply the recognition of her claims to a provision, in acknowledgment of the services she had rendered to his father and to himself. His sordid nature quailed within him at the bare prospect of expressing the emotion of gratitude in a pecuniary form; and, after first consulting appearances by a show of hesitation, he consented to adopt the captain's suggestion, and to humour Mrs. Lecount.

"But I must be considered in this matter," proceeded Mr. Noel Vanstone. "My concession to Lecount's weakness must not be misunderstood. Miss Bygrave must not be allowed to suppose I am afraid of my housekeeper."

The captain declared that no such idea ever had entered, or ever could enter, Miss Bygrave's mind. Mr. Noel Vanstone returned to the subject nevertheless, again and again, with his customary pertinacity. Would it be indiscreet if he asked leave to set himself right personally with Miss Bygrave? Was there any hope that he might have the happiness of seeing her on that day? or, if not, on the next day? or, if not, on the day after? Captain Wragge answered cautiously: he felt the importance of not rousing Noel Vanstone's distrust by too great an alacrity in complying with his wishes.

"An interview to-day, my dear sir, is out of the question," he said. "She is not well enough; she wants repose. To-morrow I propose taking her out, before the heat of the day begins—not merely to avoid embarrassment, after what has happened with Mrs. Lecount—but because

the morning air, and the morning quiet, are essential in these nervous cases. We are early people here—we shall start at seven o'clock. If you are early too, and if you would like to join us, I need hardly say that we can feel no objection to your company on our morning walk. The hour, I am aware, is an unusual one—but, later in the day, my niece may be resting on the sofa, and may not be able to see visitors."

Having made this proposal, purely for the purpose of enabling Mr. Noel Vanstone to escape to North Shingles at an hour in the morning when his housekeeper would be probably in bed, Captain Wragge left him to take the hint, if he could, as indirectly as it had been given. He proved sharp enough (the case being one in which his own interests were concerned) to close with the proposal on the spot. Politely declaring that he was always an early man when the morning presented any special attraction to him, he accepted the appointment for seven o'clock; and rose soon afterwards to take his leave.

"One word at parting," said Captain Wragge. "This conversation is entirely between ourselves. Mrs. Lecount must know nothing of the impression she has produced on my niece. I have only mentioned it to you, to account for my apparently churlish conduct, and to satisfy your own mind. In confidence, Mr. Vanstone—strictly in confidence. Good morning!"

With these parting words, the captain bowed his visitor out. Unless some unexpected disaster occurred, he now saw his way safely to the end of the enterprise. He had gained two important steps in advance, that morning. He had sown the seeds of variance between the housekeeper and her master; and he had given Mr. Noel Vanstone a common interest with Magdalen and himself, in keeping a secret from Mrs. Lecount. "We have caught our man," thought Captain Wragge, cheerfully rubbing his hands—"We have caught our man at last!"

On leaving North Shingles, Mr. Noel Vanstone walked straight home; fully restored to his place in his own estimation, and sternly determined to carry matters with a high hand, if he found himself in collision with Mrs. Lecount.

The housekeeper received her master at the door with her mildest manner, and her gentlest smile. She addressed him with downcast eyes; she opposed to his contemplated assertion of independence a barrier of impenetrable respect.

"May I venture to ask, sir," she began, "if your visit to North Shingles has led you to form the same conclusion as mine on the subject of Miss Bygrave's illness?"

"Certainly not, Lecount. I consider your conclusion to have been both hasty and prejudiced."

"I am sorry to hear it, sir. I felt hurt by Mr. Bygrave's rude reception of me—but I was not aware that my judgment was prejudiced by it. Perhaps he received *you*, sir, with a warmer welcome?"

"He received me like a gentleman—that is all I think it necessary to say, Lecount—he received me like a gentleman."

This answer satisfied Mrs. Lecount on the one doubtful point that had perplexed her. Whatever Mr. Bygrave's sudden coolness towards herself might mean, his polite reception of her master implied that the risk of detection had not daunted him, and that the conspiracy was still in full progress. The housekeeper's eyes brightened: She had expressly calculated on this result. After a moment's thinking, she addressed her master with another question:

"You will probably visit Mr. Bygrave again, sir?"

"Of course I shall visit him—if I please."

"And perhaps see Miss Bygrave, if she gets better?"

"Why not? I should be glad to know why not? Is it necessary to ask your leave first, Lecount?"

"By no means, sir. As you have often said (and as I have often agreed with you), you are master. It may surprise you to hear it, Mr. Noel—but I have a private reason for wishing that you should see Miss Bygrave again."

Mr. Noel started a little, and looked at his housekeeper with some curiosity.

"I have a strange fancy of my own, sir, about that young lady," proceeded Mrs. Lecount. "If you will excuse my fancy, and indulge it, you will do me a favour for which I shall be very grateful."

"A fancy?" repeated her master, in growing surprise. "What fancy?"

"Only this, sir," said Mrs. Lecount.

She took from one of the neat little pockets of her apron a morsel of note paper, carefully folded into the smallest possible compass; and respectfully placed it in Noel Vanstone's hand.

"If you are willing to oblige an old and faithful servant, Mr. Noel," she said, in a very quiet and very impressive manner, "you will kindly put that morsel of paper into your waistcoat-pocket; you will open and read it, for the first time, *when you are next in Miss Bygrave's company*; and you will say nothing of what has now passed between us to any living creature, from this time to that. I promise to explain my strange request, sir, when you have done what I ask, and when your next interview with Miss Bygrave has come to an end."

She curtsied with her best grace, and quietly left the room.

Mr. Noel Vanstone looked from the folded paper to the door, and from the door back to the folded paper, in unutterable astonishment. A mystery in his own house, under his own nose! What did it mean?

It meant that Mrs. Lecount had not wasted her time that morning. While the captain was casting the net over his visitor at North Shingles, the housekeeper was steadily mining the ground under his feet. The folded paper contained nothing less than a carefully-written extract from

the personal description of Magdalen in Miss Garth's letter. With a daring ingenuity which even Captain Wragge might have envied, Mrs. Lecount had found her instrument for exposing the conspiracy, in the unsuspecting person of the victim himself!

SMALL-BEER CHRONICLES.

WHERE is the historian of our social life? While the great events of the History of Europe are duly recorded; while the diplomatic struggles, the commercial transactions, the political progress, of the civilised world, are discussed, reviewed, and commemorated; does any one note down the social changes which follow the progress of those greater developments, which are in some sort brought about by them, which may perhaps help to elucidate them, and which, even if they do not, are in themselves sufficiently interesting to have an historian of their own? Where is the Registrar-General who shall from time to time furnish a report how the great nation whose public doings are so adequately recorded, behave in the seclusion of private life? Where, in a word, is the Chronicler of the Country's Small-Beer?

Here he is, at the reader's service.

Whither are we tending? In manners, in morals, in literature, the drama, art, domestically? In our health, our temper of mind, our habits of life, the nature of our amusements? Is all going on right, or are there any little decay spots in our constitution which might be eradicated with advantage before they spread? Is any disease threatening us just now: not a great plague of London, but some lowered tone of the system generally?

The last fifteen or twenty years, which have wrought great alterations in the world at large, have brought about corresponding changes in our social existence. The changes have not been all on a grand scale. There have been smaller alterations too. Change, however, there has been in every direction. We are no longer the same people. The sun has set on many virtues of the olden time, and on many vices. Ladies are no longer the same, gentlemen are no longer the same. Costume has altered. Manners have altered. Form of speech has changed. The external aspect of our towns, our mode of getting from one town to another—all these things and many more have gone through great changes; nay, the very form which the age's greatness has taken, is itself new, and manifested after a sort that would have astonished our forefathers not a little. But here is a subject for the Chronicler of Small-Beer—OUR GREATNESS.

He would be a poor officer if he had nothing to say in connexion with so important a subject, so grave a national symptom, as the Great Exhibition of 1862. The public tongue is not always easy to get a glimpse of. Here it is exposed to our scrutiny. It is hard to get one's middle finger on the public pulse. Here it is beating away, in such an exposed

predicament, that one can test it to half a second.

The biography of a nation—nay, the history of the world itself, for we may as well go to work on a grand scale while we are about it—is in some respects comparable to the life of an individual. As the man has his infancy, his manhood, his maturity, his decay, so has the nation and the world. As the man passes through a series of phases and developments, putting off one and assuming the next, shedding one skin and getting another—which is his right and wholesome career—so it is with the nation and with the world. The world passes on from stage to stage, and from phase to phase. Woe to the people which should fail so to advance! Woe, and double woe to the individuals who would hinder the advance. The car of progress shall crush them, and they deserve it. (There is, by-the-by, a High Church Court in the Great Exhibition—but we have not got to that yet. We shall have some purgation to propose in connexion with that court by-and-by.)

To resume our comparison of the world with the man, and adhering still to the analogy between the two, one's first natural inquiry would be: How old is the world now? This is a difficult question to answer, but, on consideration, we are disposed to reply that, though not as Falstaff says, "clean past its youth," it is just touching on the border of middle age. Estimating the duration of the man's life at seventy years, and continuing our original comparison, we should judge the world to be about five-and-thirty, or from that to forty. The world, then, is no longer in its first youth. Its illusions are over, it is grown up, it has been through romance, and has become practical. Its long minority is over, its painful and severe education. Its early youth when it put on armour and went to the relief of the distressed damsel is gone. It has lost its taste for jingling spurs, and waving plume, and coloured jerkin. It dresses in sober broadcloth. It no longer makes pilgrimages and shuts itself up in monasteries, and takes vows of poverty. It builds model lodging-houses, and, when its sympathies are moved by a touching tale, sends a Mendicity officer to ascertain that all is as represented, before administering relief. The world is sensible and cautious, it looks before it leaps. The gilt is off the gingerbread, and that comestible appears for what it is.

And surely all this corresponds very much with the career of the average man. His life changes, his tastes change, and with so much of regularity that it is not difficult to predict at what particular epoch the taste for cricket-bats will be succeeded by a taste for clothes, for jewellery, for dancing, for dinners, for money-making, for domestic life, for hospitality, for excelling in wine, for retiring to the country, for building, for possessing land. Each of these phases the man passes through, and as he arrives at the new one, the last is abandoned.

Now, the analogy between this progress of the man and that of the world must not be pressed

—any more than other analogies—too far; for to carry analogy into too great detail is to destroy its usefulness, and deprive ourselves of one of the safest and wisest teachers we have. We contend for no more than that the world has become practical and sensible. It has done with toys, it has lost its enthusiasm for studs and scarf-pins. It has got to think of what will “do.” The boyish days are over. The “box of paints” is put by. The world makes money. It is cautious, moderate in speech, fore-thoughtful in act. Machinery and the arts that facilitate the act of living are alive and flourishing. How many things are dead! Dead but not buried all of them. Some of our dead institutions are embalmed, and so kept above ground; some are galvanised into a kind of life by those whose interest it is to keep them going. Some are paralysed and virtually defunct, though the heavy breath is still drawn and the languid pulse still beats. Thus, popery is dead, and monarchy—real old absolute monarchy—is dead, but the bodies are still above ground, and will remain so for many a year to come. And the American Union is dead, but what fighting is going on *over that* body, and what a funeral wake it has!

We must be careful what we do in classing things among the dead. It is not everything that has lost its first exceeding vitality and the strength of novelty, that can be set down as dead, nor even everything that has ceased to advance. When new members are admitted into society the older members are not therefore ejected. The new are added to the old, and all go on together.

It would be wrong, for instance, for any one, observing the extraordinary vitality of mechanics in the present day, to say that the arts were dead. To say that the natural expression of the mind of the age is not through art would be to speak the truth, as it would be to say that it *is* through machinery. There *were* ages when the mind of civilisation expressed itself through art. That time is over, and the man who would be essentially a man of the day must ally himself with the mode of expression belonging to the day. Just now, he had better on the whole hang on to the tender of the locomotive than occupy the best seat in the chariot of fancy.

It is impossible to spend any time at the International Exhibition—impossible to look at the building itself, or to pass from the picture-galleries to the machinery department—without feeling in what direction the vigour of the age is tending, and what are its greatest wonders and things of mark. The arts are invented, established, brought to perfection. We can only go on practising them, each professor bringing his own manner of dealing with them to bear on them, and enriching their repertory with his additional atom. This is much to do in the arts, and few, indeed, are the men who can do it. But with mechanics the case is widely, widely different. What a prospect is open to the student in *that* science. What a land of promise is spread out before him. What rewards tempt him on. What

possible discoveries urge him to new efforts, and banish that lassitude and despondency which often paralyse the follower of the arts. When the mechanician has turned that corner in the road, or got past the brow of that hill, he knows not what may reward his toil. The voyage of discovery in which he is engaged was only entered on the other day. But yesterday the electric telegraph was invented; the iron road but the day before. To-morrow, some other new invention, not dreamed of now, will be in force. “And why may not I be the discoverer of it?” says the mechanician as he works and thinks. It is more encouraging to help to raise a new edifice than to add fresh beauties to a structure already brought to such great perfection.

This will probably force itself on the mind of any unprejudiced observer who will feel the public pulse as it beats at South Kensington. Neither the enthusiast who thinks art the only thing in the world, nor the practical man who is all for iron, will entirely agree with us. But both are prejudiced. And before Prejudice, Reason has only to retire.

Suppose Reason were by any chance to direct her steps into the mediæval court, the ecclesiastical decorative department, of the International Exhibition. What a fall she would have to try with Prejudice there! One of two results must come of such a visit. Either Prejudice must shut up her court, entirely routed by Reason; or Reason, giving one glance round, must retire and leave the thing to Time, to be dealt with as that merciful and wise judge does deal with things. What a mystical and becoming light is over all the objects contained in that court! It is dark, not because the light cannot get to that part of the building, but because the light has been wilfully shut out—just as the designs are quaint and uncouth, not because the designer could not make them otherwise, but because he wilfully drew a curtain over his brains.

The white neckcloths and the spectacles gleam in that obscure court, like meteors. They were better out of it. It is not helping the ecclesiastical cause to ally it with darkness and with obsolete modes of expression, as if it had no part with the age, and as if modern light and modern knowledge and modern ways of thought must be banished before Church matters can be discussed at all.

This is the loose screw here. Many of the designs are pretty and elegant, but they are all tainted with affectation and dilettanteism—bad things to mix up with anything, but very very bad things to mix up with religion. How tired one gets of the altar-cloths and fald-stools, the trefoils and fleurs-de-lis, and all the rest of this Church upholstery! What a thing to have opinions which cannot be held comfortably unless their proprietor has a sofa to match. Such a sofa as that in one of the corners of this court, straight and angular, and stuffed, possibly, with discarded horse-hair shirts. It is pleasant, by the way, to observe that mediæval tendencies are not inconsistent with an appreciation of the creature-comforts; for, hard by this same angular sofa,

with decorations looking like bars of music, are a couple of uncompromising spirit-stands, with bottles of very comfortable dimensions duly labelled. It almost reconciles one to this absurd court, to see gleaming in the corner among all sorts of strange and uncouth matters, the prosaic word "Rum."

Nearly every part of that Exhibition is devoted to progress. "See how we advance" is the cry. But here, as in those pictures by the Belgian Leys, the boast is rather "see how we go back. You are almost as badly off as the people of the sixteenth century." Wicked is the word for this. For a man with the glorious light of this age around him to labour day after day at pictures such as those is really wicked. Fancy any one getting up in the morning, and receiving his letter by the post, or haply a telegram fresh from the wires, and then going into his studio to try and force his mind back into a fit state to reproduce the infantine conceits of four centuries ago!

But, after all, we need not be very angry. This little court and these few pictures form but a very small portion of the great and goodly show, and in every other part of the building "Onward" is the motto of the workman. Not in unintelligible characters, not in Gothic letters that one cannot read, but in types to be understood by every passer-by.

It is not necessary to examine every yard of material, or every piece of china or hardware exhibited, in order to get to the conclusion that taste has made and is making, great and steady advances. The immense contrast, again, between the taste shown among the civilised nations, even when it is good, and that displayed by what are sometimes called the *uncivilised*, may be estimated without a deliberate study of every yard of Eastern carpet, or every Chinese jar in the building. It is extraordinary to see how far the uncivilised people are beyond the civilised, in many matters of taste, and more especially in choice and brilliancy of colour. We finish neatly; we *now*, at any rate for the most part, combine colours harmoniously, but all we do is so small, so timid. It is a thing of rules and laid-down laws, and there is no hope of its being otherwise. The barbarous peoples in all matters of design have genius, and genius is audacious. Where there is no genius, there is, and *should* be, timidity. When we are not timid, but force a courage in design for which there is no groundwork of innate power, we become simply vulgar. To be neat, to be harmonious, pretty, highly finished, is all we can at present attempt, and even of this the results are often most charming. But the lavish, reckless splendour of uncivilised design is beyond us altogether.

It is difficult not to be lured away thus from time to time into criticisms on the separate objects exhibited in this great Bazaar, but such criticism is only parenthetical, and is not the distinct function of the Registrar-General. What that officer has undertaken is to show wherein the greatness of this age chiefly lies, and

what particular phase in the history of our development we have reached.

We must look westward. The rising power of the age, its life, its natural development, the touch to which most natures of the present day respond, comes from that long low shed which is called the Western Annexe. Thither let us bend our steps.

If "Onward" be the motto throughout the great building, it is pre-eminently and above all the motto of the Western Annexe. As one passes that portion of the Exhibition edifice, even outside the walls, what a busy noise of rattling machinery comes from within. Progress enough here. Progress of thousand-horse power. One seems to hear the clatter of their hoofs. What proclamation of present strength, what promise of future achievement, in every wheel and piston-rod working under that roof. The wonders already performed are great, but who shall say what greater marvels are in store.

Even the people we meet in the Western Annexe, who are in any sort mixed up with the arts illustrated there, seem to wear a different aspect from other men. They look so strong, so prosperous, so alive. Confident as to the value of their work, conscious that the world cannot do without them, with the world on their side, understood by the men of their time, they work with courage and thrive. These are different men from the poet, the sculptor, the painter, whose lives are passed (unless they are very sorry performers indeed) in such misgivings as must attend the work of men who deal with Fancies in an age of Facts.

And who shall say that this age of machinery and steel is without its appeal to the imagination and to our sense of the beautiful? The engine that slowly year by year eats its way through the Alps, and will at last drill the Mont Cenis through, as a needle's eye is drilled, makes surely some appeal to fancy as it struggles with the most stubborn of the elements. To the fancy also appeals in a widely different way, that wondrous mechanism which almost seems to have a power of thought, and by which these very words might, in an incredibly short time, be fixed in print.

On the principle of selecting one or two things the most marked of their kind as illustrations of the class to which they belong, it may be admissible to register here in half a dozen words the existence of a machine which, though perhaps not more ingenious than some others, appeals more strongly than the rest to the intellectual faculty. The new machine for setting manuscript up in print, and for *putting the letters back in their places alphabetically after they are done with*, is a machine that may almost be said to think. At first one cannot understand how that last achievement, which implies selection, can be executed without thought. But thus it is: The compositor sits before an instrument with keys like those of a piano, on each of which is inscribed a letter or a mark of punctuation—comma, semicolon, note of interrogation. In combination with these keys are a set of tubes, each

of which contains a different letter, one tube being full of *a*'s, another of *b*'s, and so on. The lower ends of these tubes converge towards a kind of long narrow trough, in which the words are to be formed. Suppose that the sentence "To be, or not to be," has to be printed. The compositor touches the key marked *t*, and instantly a valve is opened at the foot of the tube holding the *t*'s, and one of them is let down into the trough. Then he touches the *o* key, the *b* and *e* keys, and the comma key successively, and each of the letters descends into the trough and takes its place next to the last arrival. As each of the letters joins the others, of course it pushes those already in the trough onward, till at last a very long line of printed words, all in their right order, fills the trough. While you are watching this beautiful process, and as the trough becomes fuller and fuller, you find yourself getting into a state of apprehension that the types will run out at the other end, and all fall in disorder on the ground. You need not be alarmed. At the end of the row of words the compositor has been forming, is a heavy lead, which is pushed along further and further as each new letter is added, until at last it topples over, the trough being full, and in its fall strikes a bell placed beneath for the purpose. When the compositor hears the bell, he knows that the trough is full; the row of words is removed to the printing press, and the whole process is commenced over again with the words next in order.

One can more easily understand this piece of mechanism, beautiful and intricate as it is, than the other with which it is connected. The letters which make up the words "To be, or not to be," have all got to be separated again, and put back alphabetically in their places, ready for use. How is this to be done?

A set of grooves, more than thirty in number, enough to supply each letter of the alphabet, and the different notes of punctuation with a groove each, are set on a circular table: the grooves radiating towards a common centre, in which there is a kind of wheel set round with little receptacles, each of which will hold one letter and no more. The wheel is set in motion and begins to revolve. As it does so, each of these little receptacles comes under a kind of spout, out of which, one at a time, the letters fall in order, as they come from the press. The types fall into these receptacles, and their ends hang out below. These ends are furnished with small notches which fit into certain other notches at the mouths of the radiating grooves, and all which notches are in level, or some other way, different. Thus the notches which fit the end of letter *a* will not fit the end of letter *b*. The letters, then, with their ends hanging out as described, turn round on the wheel and come to the mouths of each of the radiating grooves in succession; but as the notches at the mouth of each vary, *a* cannot get into *b*'s groove, or *e* into *t*'s. Each goes on until it comes to the notch that fits it, by which it is instantly caught and dragged down: the wheel going on and the empty receptacle being

filled when it gets under the spout with the letter next in order.

The excessive delicacy and ingenuity of this one piece of mechanism incline one to separate it from the rest, but it is, in truth, not more wonderful than many of the other machines of which this annexe is full. What is there that these machines can *not* do? From cracking a nut or winding a ball of cotton, to lifting a perfect Niagara of water at a stroke, all seems within reach of their mingled subtlety and strength.

But the Registrar-General would be poorly fulfilling his office if he took notice merely of those matters which everybody else has examined and approved. It is the duty of such a functionary to poke into holes and corners and see what is to be seen there. And still among the machinery, but neglected and hidden, and wholly unappreciated, what in pity's name are these poor little fabrics of tin and wood which we light upon in a very obscure corner of the Italian department? Little sorry wares these, made up of odds and ends of wood and small scraps of tin, and fashioned in the roughest way. They look as if they were made by some workman at his spare moments. Perhaps they were. Perhaps his wife and children watched their progress and thought London would be electrified when these inventions were displayed before it. They are, it seems, small models of certain inventions designed to be made on a larger scale for the benefit of humanity. Let us read the inscriptions upon them. One is the "model of an instrument for smoothing muddi roads with great speed and economy." Another is "a mechanism that can be applied to different motory contrivances as requiring a rotary movement at various distances and in various directions"! Here, too, is "a machine for thrusting the grain out of ears of Indian corn," and also "a machine for an economical and speedy removal of snow from the public streets, leaving but a thin layer of it"—this sounds slippery—"easily swept away." There is something very pitiful and affecting about these innocent little models, with their inscriptions in broken English. There they lie in an unknown corner, unseen, neglected, like many another object in this mighty show, which was expected by the maker of it, and by his friends, to make an immense sensation. Never mind; this honest engineer of Pavia may be in the right road, for aught we know, and may some day construct a "mechanis" which shall not only "smooth the muddi roads" of England, but smooth his own rough road to eminence and fortune.

To fortune, and to eminence too, the way lies surely through this Western Annexe. As you walk up one of its aisles and down another, you find at one place electricity blazing upon you with a light stronger than that of an ordinary day, at another the same power printing the words of a despatch issued a thousand miles away, and on which the fate of a nation may hang. Here, backwards and forwards, like a

tide, the spinning machine advances to get gain, and retires with it garnered up in perpetual progress. There, the pattern grows as you look on the carpet. In one corner, cigars are rolled; in another, blocks of ice grow out of the heat and steam. Everywhere the strong steel arms are thrust out, and drawn back laden with profit. Everywhere the wheel revolves. Everywhere there is rushing of waters, and turning of wheels, and crashing of metal; and by everything that is done the progress of the world is hastened. Student of such arts as these press on and onward yet! Cultivator of a tenth muse, whose votaries worship amidst the clang of steel and the whirl of wheels, go on, and prosper! Your crown shall not be of laurel nor of bay. It shall be a nimbus of polished steel, an emblem of that one eternal form, the wheel, which still recurs for ever in your labours. The wheel on which the culprits of the old time were broken, and on which, in these modern days, we are breaking the idols which ignorance and superstition have set up, and scattering their fragments to the winds of Heaven.

We cannot all devote ourselves to science or mechanics, but happy those whose lot it is to be engaged in such studies and speculations. They are in the van of that vast army that lays siege to the gates of knowledge. They are the High Priests who worship in the temple of wisdom, and seek to extract secrets from the oracle for the benefit of the congregation that waits behind them.

And what of those who head yet another band of pilgrims, those who having journeyed to the brink of that great chasm which lies beyond and outside this sphere of ours, stand upon the edge of the material shore, and strain with eager eyes into the darkness of the unknown firmament? If they are great who would strive to unlock the mysteries of earth and win new secrets from the mountain or the mine, what are they who stand upon the hill-top, tiptoe, and yearn for knowledge of the secrets above their heads? Well, as we get additional knowledge, or rather as our ignorance is diminished by an additional fraction, may we cry out for more and more light. What surface-knowledge is ours. The deepest hole we have made in this enormous ball on which we live, is a pin-prick below its outer crust; the highest flight of the aeronaut takes him nearer to the planets by a poor four or five miles. Shall we get, now that we have spread ourselves over the surface of the world, and know so much of its outside—shall we get more knowledge of what lies within and without it? It may be so. The geologist has not been long at work, and the air-navigator makes but trial-trips. Who knows what may happen in a year or two? We may have a succession of towns moored in mid-air between this and the moon, with air tubes as long as the Atlantic Cable to supply them with a breathable atmosphere; and when you ask a friend "where he is going this autumn?" he may tell you that he is off to "Skyville for quiet."

Meanwhile, and during the time that Skyville is still in the clouds, we may be satisfied that we have done some few wonderful things already. How wonderful are those photographic views of the moon which—placed in a rather out-of-the-way situation in one of the galleries—are among the most interesting things exhibited! One can peer into the crannies and lumps upon the moon's surface, by means of those views, to one's heart's content. Of course those same lumps and crannies, when magnified to their real size, are such mountains and valleys as are found among the Himalayas or the Alps. It is a curious thing that all these roughnesses and inequalities which represent chains of hills, all appear to be arranged in a circular form, as if all the hills were volcanic with craters in the midst. Yet this may be simply an effect of light. We know that the flickering lights which appear on the ground in a wood when the sun is shining, all partake of a circular form. Now, the apertures among the leaves through which the light comes are not round, but of various shapes. The rays of light affect, but are not affected by, the apertures through which they pass. Some such phenomenon may account for the circular appearance of these same roughnesses on the surface of the moon.

As one leaves the place where those photographs are, one feels that sadness which Wordsworth has spoken of, and something, too, of terror. For it is terrible to think of that vast globe away in the blue space, a chaos of rugged forms, deserted, silent. It is so now as we write, and as you read, while the cabs are rattling in Piccadilly, and the "Cure" is being sung by the comic singer who stands upon his head to sing it.

RUSSIAN TRAVEL.

WOLVES.

AFTER visiting the White Village, I had agreed to accompany Saunderson to a place called the Little Village, which belonged to the widowed lady who had obtained from the white villagers mercy for being merciful. The management of this estate, including a large saw-mill, corn-mill, and sugar-mill, was under the control of the intelligent gentleman whose acquaintance I had made at the hunt. The distance was about thirty miles, and, although we could have gone by a more open and safe route, we decided on the forest track, as the nearest, and as affording the best chance of sport by the way. During two preceding nights the frost had sharpened, until the snow was crisp and firm, and formed in any direction through the wood a magnificent hard road, without a track on it. Instead of shunning the wolves, which abounded in the forest, we resolved to court their company, and for this purpose carried with us a decoy, in the shape of a young pig carefully tied up in a strong canvas sack. Rifles, knives, ammunition, brandy-flasks, and sandwiches, having been put into our well-appointed sleigh, we set off, passed the church, crossed the bridge, went up the hill a

little, and then striking into the forest, were soon in its labyrinths. Our driver was the starost's son, a man of about five-and-thirty, who had established himself as coachman on all my excursions. Two of Saunderson's wolf-hounds and the count's Newfoundland dog, lay at our feet, perfectly alive to the possibilities of sport.

Sleigh-driving is the one grand unapproachable unalloyed pleasure to be enjoyed in Russia. There is nothing to compare with a long furious sweep in a good Russian sleigh over hard crisp clean snow, wrapped in good furs. With a great bear-skin hanging over the back of the sleigh, and its apron, another bear-skin, covering your legs, with your feet encased in fur goloshes, resting on a doubled-up black Siberian curly sheepskin, with a fur cap on your head as tall and straight and round as a very large English hat without the rim, with your hands buried four-inch deep amongst the sable sleeves of your coat;—as you lie easily back, thus comforted, under a clear frosty bright sky, the horses, in graceful silver-mounted harness, tossing their heads, the bells at their necks tinkling merrily, the driver in high wolf-skin cap and sheepskin coat, over which he has drawn a handsome blue castan trimmed below the arms with silver-plated round buttons as large as little eggs, and with a large parti-coloured sash bound round his waist—a fellow all excitement, but coolly managing three wild horses, who tear on at whirling speed, dashing the crisp snow in showers from their hoofs, sometimes for a moment or two half blinding you with the finest cleanest and whitest powder in the world,—with these appliances, and as you see and feel them all, you know the luxury of sleigh-driving. I am not speaking of a drive through the streets of Petersburg, but of a drive of thirty or forty miles over untrodden virgin snow through the forest, when the trees are clothed in a dense fantastic foliage of hoar-frost festooned with millions of stalactites, and when the pure bracing air as you rush through it sends the blood tingling through your veins.

Before we had quite left all evidences of traffic we heard the sound of men shouting and laughing at some distance. Determined to see what was going on, we left the sleigh, and taking our rifles, made towards the noise. Sounds travel far in a wood through clear cold air, and we had further to go than we expected before we found several men, who in felling trees had unearthed a bear. There he stood on his hind-legs, in front of what had been his hibernating place—a large hole under an oak which had been just pulled down. He stood with his back against the trunk, and his fore-feet beating the air, and the men were amusing themselves with his antics. As he seemed to want something to hug, they stepped up close to him, and put a lump of wood covered with mat between his arms. He closed them with a growl, and gave it a hug, and tore the mat to pieces. I was astonished—only for a moment—to see the men so close to him, teasing

him without fear for themselves. There was no cause for astonishment; poor Bruin had not yet come to his senses. He was quite blind, thin, and gaunt, his hide hanging on him like a loose garment, and his fur like that of a mangy dog. In the beginning of winter he had prepared his hole, and crept into it. There he had lain on one side, sucking one paw. There he had turned on his other side, and was fast exhausting the other paw, when his dwelling was broken open by an evil chance, and he was forced to get up and collect his benumbed and dormant faculties, among which sight seemed slow to return. He had a dismal and repulsive aspect, as he stood or advanced on his hind-legs a little way from his support, and retreated to it growling and angry. To prevent the men from torturing the poor creature to death, we put a bullet into the right place, and left the men and the bear together. The bullet saved him from a more cruel death: which is our only excuse for having shot that poor blind sleepy bewildered Bruin.

Again whirling over the snow, through the wood, the stern and cold magnificence of the scene passed all powers of description. It was evident from the division of trees that we were following some known track, though it was sometimes so narrow and circuitous that we were often in danger of collisions with the trunks of old oaks and their branches. Now and then we emerged from the trees into a wide open, of perhaps one or two hundred acres, with here and there a magnificent oak, covered with hoary foliage, towering in solitary grandeur. In summer, these opens present the appearance of parks artificially laid out, surrounded by dark forest on all sides. The driver was never at a loss. "I know these trees, baron. There is no danger with such angels of horses. Noo! noo! Step out, my dears. We shall soon get among the wolves. I think I see their marks."

"Shall we try the pig, as a decoy?" I said to Saunderson.

"By all means, let us have a shot at something that is not blind and helpless. I cannot get the old bear off my conscience, poor wretch."

The pig was dragged from under the seat, where he had lain very quiet, and, by dint of pinching his tail, was made to perform a solo of pig music with variations, which resounded for miles through the stillness of the forest. For some time we could discern no wolves, but at length we caught sight of two, skulking among the underwood, in a parallel line with our path, but at a respectful distance. Although we kept up the decoy music, they were shy of approaching within shot. One end of a long white cotton rope was then attached to the mouth of the pig's bag, the other end to the back of the sleigh, and as we slowly turned a bend in the track the bag was dropped behind. We slackened pace, and, as the rope ran out, the pig became of course stationary. When the rope was all run out, we

stopped and got out of the sleigh to watch the result, taking our station about two hundred yards from the pig, behind a tree, with our eyes on the place where we had last seen the two wolves. The pig, meantime, finding himself in a new position, put new zeal into his music. The wolves left the cover with springs and jumps, and soon approached the poor pig, who was in no greater danger than ourselves. As they were on the point of springing on the bag—in fact, one of them had made the jump—a sign caused the driver to move on with his horses, thus pulling the prey out of their reach, and setting them both wondering what this could mean. The wonder did not last long, for the wolves distinctly had smelt pork, and meant to dine on it.

They again approached the bag, and the bag again receded, while the most vociferous and resounding shrieks proceeded from the pig inside. The wolves made a furious run, and again the driver gave reins to the horses till he had pulled the pig nearly on a line with the place where Saunderson and I were standing: the wolves following with tongues out and glaring eyes. Both rifles went off at the same moment, and, strange to say, only one wolf rolled over. We had both fired into one. The other wolf sprang for cover, but was stopped and brought to bay by the three dogs, who very soon made an end of him, receiving in the struggle a few sharp bites from his ugly teeth.

This method of decoying the wolves is common in that part of the country, and it is not unattended with danger, for, in case of a large pack being attracted, nothing but fleet horses can save the hunters. We had this advantage, besides rifles and dogs, and were prepared for as many wolves as might show themselves.

"Do you hear that?" said Saunderson, as an unmistakable howling yelp was borne to us on the wind. "We have only killed the advanced guard; the pack is in full cry. Be quick; fetch in the pig, and let us drag these two behind the sleigh."

We tied the rope round the neck of each wolf, and dragged both as fast as possible, secured the dogs in the sleigh, and jumped in ourselves. Then off we sped again, wolves by this time visible on each side of us and behind us. We soon found we could sustain a pace of three feet to their two, and this cleared us of risk. All we had to do was to prevent their getting ahead of us.

Having reloaded our empty barrels and lighted our cigars, we kept watch on either side for a good shot; but it is not easy to get a good shot in a running sleigh, unless the object be stationary, large, and near.

"Mattvic, go slower, keep your eye on the horses, and pull up very gradually when I cry 'stop.'"

"I hear."

A detachment behind were now coming up in fine style.

"Slower, Mattvic."

"I hear."

We got on our knees on the seat of the sledge with our faces to the approaching wolves, about fifteen in number; we rested our rifles on the back, and as the wolves came up Saunderson said,

"Now, take one on the left, and I'll take one on the right, and as soon as you see their teeth, fire."

"Stop, Mattvic."

"I hear."

Gradually the sleigh came to a stand. The wolves were by this time within twenty yards of us, and we could see their grinning and sharp grinders, their tongues lapping, and the light in their fiery eyes.

"Are you ready? Fire! Two down. Again! The other barrel. Ready? Fire! Other two down. Drive on, Mattvic, slowly; it will take them some time to consider of that."

The wolves all stopped, and seemed to gather round their fallen friends. A turn in the wood hid them from view. Even our enemies on the right and left flanks, paused at the unexpected reports of the guns, and allowed us to proceed without molestation. We went more and more slowly, and at length stopped altogether and waited; but no more wolves came up.

"I am afraid," said Saunderson, "our wolf-hunting is over for to-day. Drive on, Mattvic, we can't help it."

"Listen, barons," said Mattvic. "We can trap them all. I'll be the pig."

"Trap them. How?"

"It is easily done. About three versts from this, is Timofey Evanoffage, the woodman's hut. You have only to make one turn to the right, and keep straight on, and you will reach it. He has a wolf-trap. Get all ready, and I will bring on the wolves. Never fear. Only you must give me the little horse; he is swift and sure; I have hunted wolves before with him."

After a slight hesitation about the man's safety, which he thought in no peril of any sort, his plan was adopted. The little horse was got out and given to Mattvic; Saunderson mounted the dickey, and on we went ahead. Our man, screaming like a pig, rode back to invite the wolves to follow him into Timofey's trap. Around Timofey's house, was a strong high palisade; through this there was only one entrance, by a door opening inward and hung by a pulley and heavy balance-weight, so when a wolf pushed himself through this door, it closed, and shut him into the space between the house and palisade. This space was again divided off by strong cross-partitions round the premises, in each of which was fixed a sliding panel or a drop panel, that could be pulled up or let down from within the house. By these means the inmates could separate the wolves, and kill them with dogs, guns, or hatchets, at their leisure. I had heard of one man trapping in this manner as many as fifty wolves in a winter, besides other game, the

skins of which were worth to him at least one hundred and fifty roubles.

As we approached the hut we found it of larger dimensions than we had expected, and the palisade seemed to take in a larger circumference than one hut required. We shouted, but no one answered; all was as still and quiet as if the place were uninhabited. On our entering the door through the palisade, it closed with a bang, and we found ourselves in a small enclosure with a gateway opposite, leading to the back premises; but it was made fast. After thundering at it for a minute or two, a small door in the gateway opened, and there emerged cautiously, the figure of a man rubbing his eyes and staring through his hair. He reminded me of the blind bear. His hair, like a great mass of tangled tow, was matted over his head and face; he wore a coarse grey ragged overcoat over a grey cotton or sacking shirt and trousers, and long felt boots completed his costume. He made many excuses, and asked pardon many times for keeping us waiting, but seemed to be in no hurry to admit us until we told him that a pack of wolves might be expected, and that our horses and conveyances must be put in a place of safety. The information acted on him like a galvanic shock, and he was off into the house with a spring, through a side-door inside the gateway. We followed, stooping all the time, and were in the house. It was a man-kennel, twenty or thirty feet square, a great store in the centre, dogs about a score lying on the floor, and men snoring on the top of the pack. The heat was suffocating, the stench was poisonous. Timofey soon roused the sleepers, pulling them off their perch by the legs, pouring water over their heads, cuffing the men and kicking the dogs. "Wolves! wolves! you pigs, and you all sleeping! Be quiet, dogs. No barking. Evan, take the barons' horses and dogs round by the back entrance, to the shed. Quick! Andrea, stand by the big gate, and be ready to shut it after Mattvic gets through. Put the dogs in the third division, and get out the guns! Ah, thank God and these barons for bringing us the wolves!"

We had no intention of being cooped up in the hut while the fray went on, and therefore took our station beside the man at the gateway, which now stood wide open for the admission of Mattvic and his little horse. In a short time all was quiet, and every necessary preparation made. Then came the howling of wolves, and the screaming as of a pig, the gallop of a horse over the hard crisp snow, the rush of many small feet. The outer door in the palisade was dashed open, and Mattvic, followed in half a minute by the whole pack, rushed in. The half-minute was just sufficient to enable Mattvic to vanish through the outer door into the trap. Then, as the last pressure on the door was removed, it closed with a loud sharp sound, and some five-and-twenty wolves were snared in a space not larger than twelve feet by twenty. We did not at first close the inner gateway, but, levelling our pieces at the mass of wolves now huddling

themselves up in a corner, poured in two volleys in rapid succession, then closed the gate, and reloaded for another charge. The change from the air of ferocious savage daring which the wolves had displayed in pursuit of a single horseman, to abject terror when they found themselves caught in the narrow trap, was instantaneous. They were like sheep in a pen, crushing up in a corner, riding on the top of one another, lying down on their bellies, crouching and shivering with fear. It is not necessary to describe the scene of mere slaughter. Two staves were chopped out of the gateway, that we might fire through. The drop panels were opened, and two or three were admitted at a time to the next division; there, dogs were let in on them through the adjoining trap, or they were killed by men with great bars of wood or axes, and at length when only six or seven remained, three of the men went in amongst them, and with perfect safety despatched them. They say that a worm will turn on the heel that treads on it, but wolves caught in a trap like this from which there is no escape, have less courage than a worm. They crouch, shiver, and die, as I saw, without one effort at self-defence, or one snap of retaliation.

Timofey's hut was not only a wolf-trap, but a farm-house too: it had a large shed attached, in which a few cows roamed loose during the day, and at night were put into a byre or stable. Timofey did not clean out this byre once a day, like a good modern farmer: he only spread a little straw over the dung every morning, and allowed it to accumulate until the month of June, when the cowhouse was emptied every year. After this "mucking of Timofey's byre," you had to descend a few feet if you desired to enter it, but before the "mucking" at the end of the year's accumulations, you had to ascend a few feet. In the one case you looked down on the cows, in the other you looked up at the cows. In fine, this was Timofey's manure dépôt. It was the same with his stables. He told me that the horses accumulated so much, that he had to slope a path through, by which they might get in at the doors and climb up the slope. In the shed were lying two implements which attracted my attention; the first was composed of birch-trees cut down through the centre, with the branches chopped off within a foot of the trees. Half a dozen of these timbers, about seven feet long, were tied together with twigs of trees, the flat side up, and the prongs of the branches down. Put two rough poles for shafts into this contrivance, and the Russian peasant's harrow is complete; price, nothing. Timofey told me that it did very well for his light sandy land, and that if he found it rather light sometimes, he put a heavy stone on it. The other instrument was a plough having two turned-up prongs like Dutch skates ten inches apart, set in a rough wooden frame: betwixt them, a projecting movable scoop for turning over the ground. This scoop had to be reversed

every time Timofey turned his horses. He said this was a very dear implement, for iron had to be used in its construction. It cost even as much as two roubles, or about six shillings.

CURIOSITIES OF PARISH BOOK-KEEPING.

PARISH registers as they used to be, were much livelier records than the dry entries of baptisms, marriages, and burials, now bearing the name. This assertion, Burn's History of them shall enable us here to prove. In the oldest books of the Old Testament we find registers of births, marriages, and deaths. Registers were kept in Athens and Rome. Parish registers were kept in France, as early as the year thirteen hundred and eight. In Spain, Cardinal Ximenes, in fourteen 'ninety-seven, ordered them to be kept in every parish, as a check to the frequency of divorce on the plea of spiritual affinity. It was not until the sixteenth century, that the general keeping of parish registers as written documents, began. To put beans in a bag, a white bean for every girl, and a black bean for every boy baptised, and to count them at the end of the year, had before then—even in Florence, the head-quarters of civilisation—been the registry in use.

The keeping of parish registers in England was one of the many wholesome ideas put in force in Henry the Eighth's day by that Thomas Cromwell whom Shakespeare's Wolsey charged to "fling away ambition," and in whose remarkable career there was honestly worked out the counsel which the fallen cardinal is made by the poet to give him:

Be just, and fear not.

Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,
Thy God's, and Truth's.

The date of Cromwell's injunction to the clergy, that a book or register be kept by every parson, vicar, or curate, for every church, and that every Sunday the clergyman enter therein particulars of the previous week's christenings, weddings, and burials, is the year fifteen 'thirty-eight. In the churchwardens' accounts of that year for the parish of St. Margaret's, Westminster, we read: "Paid for a Book to registre in the names of Buryals, Weddings, and Christenings, 2d." The proposal had been before the public for some time, and had formed one of the grievances set forth two years earlier in a Yorkshire rebellion. It had then been given out "that the king designed to get all the gold of England into his hands, under colour of recoinning it; that he would seize all unmarked cattle and all the ornaments of parish churches, and they should be forced to pay for christenings, marriages, and burials (orders having been given for keeping Registers thereof), and for licences to eat white bread." From the west coast also, Sir Piers Edgecombe wrote to Cromwell that "in sundry places within the shires of Cornwall and Devon there is among the king's

subjects great fear and mistrust what the King's Highness and his Council should mean, to give in commandment to the parsons and vicars of every parish that they should make a book, and surely to be kept" for registry of births, marriages, and deaths. "Their mistrust is that some charges, more than hath been in times past, shall grow to them by this occasion of registering these things; wherein if it shall please the King's Majesty to put them out of doubt, in my poor mind shall increase much hearty love." The dissolution of the monasteries made Cromwell's suggestion the more necessary, for now there were no longer the monks busy as self-appointed registrars of all kinds of events, public and private, in Chartularies, Leiger Books, Obituaries, Registers, and Chronicles.

In fifteen 'thirty-six, when the requirement to keep parish registers was first discussed, the general dissolution of the monasteries was in progress. The same fear that bred opposition to the parish registers, excited hostility to the Census of 1801. So observes MR. CHARLES KNIGHT in his admirably comprehensive Popular History of England, from which no topic that concerns the history of the English people—not even this question of the origin of parish registers—has been omitted; that book of Mr. Knight's being, let us say here by the way, the best history extant not only for, but also of, the people. The keeping of the parish register being a duty disliked by many, was so commonly neglected, that, in King Edward's reign, a fine of three-and-fourpence to the poor-box was ordained to be the penalty of each omission of that most useful and necessary act. In Queen Elizabeth's reign, the injunction was repeated, with the penalty half payable to the poor-box and half towards church repair.

Of about eleven thousand parish registers now in existence, there are eight hundred which begin in fifteen hundred and thirty-eight; forty of these contain entries prior to that date; four thousand have their first entries within the sixteenth century. As to the early dates, many of the registers (kept sometimes by negligent incumbents) are defective by reason of gaps, omissions, and other acts of carelessness. For example, the clergyman of Tunstall, in Kent, was annoyed by the number of persons with a particular name—Pottman—among his parishioners. In one year he christened three Pottmans by the name of Mary, and soon afterwards, in fifteen 'sixty-seven, the disgusted pastor coolly writes in the register, "From hence-forw^d I omitt the Pottmans." In another parish, a clerk who was a grocer took waste paper for the wrappings of his groceries, out of the parish register, and so established some considerable gaps; other registers had leaves torn out by parliamentary soldiers during the civil wars; the register of Torporley, in Cheshire, explains that a breach of five years "haped by reason of the great wars obliterating Memorials, wasting fortunes, and slaughtering persons of all sorts." The early registers of Christchurch,

Hampshire, were found in course of being steadily used up some years since by the curate's wife, who made kettle-holders of them, and who would have consumed, in good time, all the archives if the parish clerk had not interposed. In an Essex parish, the clerk being applied to for a copy of an entry, and not having pen and ink handy, said to the applicant, "You may as well take the leaf as it is," and cut two whole pages out of the register with his pocket-knife. The old registers supposed in rustic parishes to be "out of date," have been found snipped into measures by a tailor-clerk, or used for singeing geese, or given by another clerk as parchment to his daughters, who were lace-makers. In Northamptonshire, a clergyman discovered at the house of one of his parishioners, an old parchment register sewed together as a covering for the tester of a bedstead. An inhabitant of Lambeth once got a tradesman's package in a leaf of parish register, and found that it contained the entry of his own baptism.

Sometimes, a clergyman was conscientious as well as negligent. The vicar of Barkston, Leicestershire, neglected to register at the time the baptism of a certain Ellen Dun, put it afterwards in the year sixteen 'eighty-nine, and then moved it a year forward, having written under his record, "Lord pardon me if I am guilty of any error in registering Ellen Dun's name." A little earlier we have this edifying entry in the register of Melton Mowbray: "Here is a Bill of Barton Lazars of the people which was buried, and which was and married above 10 years old, for because the Clark was dead, and therefore they was not set down according as they was But they are all set down sure on nough one among another here in this place." The register of St. Mary, Aldermanbury, contains the following melancholy reason for a break in its record: "In the year 1625, Mr. Downing, the Curate of this Parish, his wife, three of his children, and the Parish Clerk, were victims to the plague, and the consequence was that a hundred names were entered in the Register from recollection." In recent time, a few years ago, the parish registers of Kew, certifying the baptism and the marriage of her Majesty's father, and other royal births, marriages, and deaths, were stolen, and they have not been recovered.

The signing of every page of a transcript by the minister and churchwardens of the year in which it was made, has given rise to the notion that any such minister and churchwardens have lived throughout all the years for which they signed. So it is that we hear of the longevity of a Mr. Simpson, of Keame, in Leicestershire, who was reported to have been incumbent of the same parish for ninety-two years, and to have had for seventy years the same churchwardens.

The title-pages to the register books vary, according to the taste of the original designer. Here, is a prayer that "our sovereign queen Elizabeth" may continue a Mother in Israel;

here, the clergyman has pointed in verse from the earthly to the heavenly roll; or perhaps he takes, like the pastor of Rodmarton, an altogether earthly view of the matter, and writes on the title-page, "If you will have this Book last, bee sure to aire it att the fier or in the Sunne three or fourre times a yeare—else it will grow dankish and rott, therefore look to it. It will not bee amisse when you finde it dankish to wipe over the leaves with a dry wollen cloth. This Place is very much subject to dankishness, therefore I say looke to it."

Times have changed very much since Camden said, "Two Christian names are rare in England, and I only remember now his Majesty who was named Charles James and the prince, his son, Henry Frederic; and among private men Thomas Maria Wingfield and Sir Thomas Posthumous Hobby." When the multiplication of Christian names first became a bad fashion it suggested the French epigram on M. L. P. St. Florentin:

Here lies a little man who had a common little mind,
Alive he had three names, and yet he leaves not one behind.

Since the Bugs have become Norfolk Howards, some question has arisen among lawyers as to a man's right to change his Christian name. The right to change the surname is undoubted, and the other right is admitted now; but the old law and custom were against it. The Christian name could only be changed at confirmation. Is it not so written in Coke upon Littleton? "If a man be baptised by the name of Thomas, and after, at his confirmation by the Bishop, he is named John, he may purchase by the name of his confirmation. And this doth agree with our ancient books, where it is holden that a man may have divers names at divers times, but not divers Christian names."

The registers illustrate the not infrequent practice, in days when mortality among the young was even far greater than it now is, of assuring the perpetuation of a father's or mother's Christian name by giving it successively to two or three living children. In the register of Beby, Leicestershire, twins are entered as baptised, one day in fifteen 'fifty-nine, John and John Picke. Two days afterwards, "the same John and John Picke were buried." There was also one John Barker who had three sons each named John Barker, and two daughters each named Margaret Barker.

With a view to the future casting of their horoscopes, the time of the birth, in the case of gentlemen's children, was often registered with astrological precision: the day, the hour, the place of the sun, the sign of the day and of the month, the planet of the day being recorded. In sixteen 'fifty-one, the clergyman of Eastbourne, Sussex, records the baptism of a son, "he being my 26th child." In the register of Allhallows, Bread-street, we read: "The 20th day of December, 1608, was baptised John, the sonne of John Mylton, Scrivener." In the register of Nunney, Somersetshire, we read of the baptism of another

genius: "Roger Starr, baptised Dec. 17, 1604. He clymed up a ladder to the top of the house, 23 Oct. 1606, being seven weeks and odd days less than two years old." At Sea Saltor, in Kent, a memorandum of another feat not to be forgotten by posterity was attached by the clergyman to an entry of baptism in seventeen 'thirty-four: "Mrs. Wigmore made the Punch."

We turn from births to burials. In the register of burials at Bishopwearmouth, is one at mid-winter, more than two centuries ago, of "John, a child from the Pannes, foresworne of his Father, forsaken of his Mother;" and at Hart, in Durham, about the same time, an old woman's burial is thus recorded: "Old Mother Midnight, of Elwick, buried." Much later, not a hundred years ago, in seventeen 'sixty-eight, there is an entry as uncivilised, in the register of Spronton, Leicestershire: "A Tom Bedlam buried."

At Ashborn, in sixteen 'fifty, is this entry: "Buried Emma wife of Thomas Toplis who was found delivered of a child after she had layne 2 houres in her grave." At Clovelly, ninety years ago, the books were kept by a sentimental clergyman, who made several entries after this manner: "Christian Meek, truly deserving of that name." Sometimes, there was censure, as of a man at Misterton "who was bought off by his Father after enlisting, and had the meanness and ingratitude to suffer the said Father to be subsisted many years by the parish." Sometimes there was satire, as in the case of the clergyman at Buxted, in the year of the great fire of London, who records the burial of "Richard Bassett, the old clarke of this Parish, who had continued in the offices of clarke and sexton for the space of 43 years, whose melody warbled forth as if he had been thumped on the back with a stone." From different registers we take these entries, representing names of persons buried: The Old Girl from the Workhouse—Old Meg—Old Plod—Bacchus, alias Hogtub, alias Fat Jack, alias John from Lord Clive at Claremont (Esher, 1772), Old Half-head—Barberry an Old Maid—Mother Gammon—Old Father Beadle. At Teddington, we read of the burial of "James Parsons, who had often eat a shoulder of mutton or a peck of hasty pudding at a time, which caused his death."

In the way of marriages, the registers contain but one record of the performance of the old unregistered ceremony of public espousal before marriage. In that case espousal preceded marriage by three years. Before seventeen 'fifty-four there were the Fleet marriages, and marriages contrary to law, nevertheless held to be valid, in divers lawless churches. One of them was St. James's, Duke's-place, where there were sometimes thirty or forty clandestine marriages in a day. In the first register book of that church, forty thousand weddings are entered. Its exemption from ecclesiastical control arose in the claim of superior rights by the Lord Mayor and citizens

of London, as lords of the manor and patrons of the church. Some of the Fleet marriage entries are curious. On one day, "Edward — and Elizabeth — were married, and would not let me know their names, ye man said he was a weaver, and liv'd in Bandyleg-walk, in the Borough." Some were entered as "quarrelsome people," others as "abusive with a Witness," or "exceeding vile in their behaviour." The Fleet parson's fee was four or five shillings, the clerk's was a shilling or two, and out of this a gratuity was paid to the person who brought the job. The fees were not always easy to get. "Had a noise for foure hours about the money," is one entry. Value was taken for the fee sometimes, by bride or bridegroom. Of one couple it is registered, "N.B. Stole a silver spoon." Of another, "Stole my clothes-brush." It was a popular superstition that if a woman were married without clothes on her back, her husband would not become answerable for her debts. This accounts for another sort of entry: "The woman ran across Ludgate-hill in her shift. 10s. 6d." The Fleet parson charged extra for marrying under such conditions. In a regular Wiltshire parish register, we find, as part of a record of marriage, "The aforesaid Ann Sellwood was married in her smock, without any clothes or headgear on." The most famous of the Fleet parsons, Parson Gaynham, after having married thirty-six thousand people, was himself, at the age of eighty, married to his servant maid. In the register of Everton, Notts, is a rhyme showing the right seasons for marrying:

Advent marriage doth deny
But Hilary gives the liberty
Septuagesima says thee nay
Eight days from Easter says you may
Rogation bids thee to remain
But Trinity sets thee free again.

Miscellaneous entries of many kinds occur in the old parish registers. Entries of licenses to eat flesh in Lent, of battles and great public events, of the parson's paying his butcher's bill, or his wrath at somebody, as "Mary Snelson is starke nought, stinking nought. Blot not this out;" of great storms, plague, or other events. At Loughborough, in Leicestershire, one June over three hundred years ago, the appearance of plague in the parish is thus registered: "The Swat, called New Acquaintance, alias Stoupe, Knave, and Know thy Master—began the 24th of this month." Touching for the king's evil, is often mentioned. In the twenty years before sixteen 'eighty-two, nearly a hundred thousand scrofulous persons were so touched by his majesty. A Derbyshire register records the dry summer in sixteen 'fifteen, when in that parish there fell only two showers, at intervals of six weeks, between Lady-day and the fourth of August. It had been preceded by what the register of Youlgrave, Derbyshire, calls "the greatest snow which ever fell upon the earth within man's memory." That fall began on the sixteenth of January, and increased until the twelfth of March, when men walked on the snow over the

buried gates and hedges. The heaps and drifts were not consumed until the twenty-eighth of May following.

OVER THE ICE.

In the winter of 1813 there was hard fighting along the borders of Canada; the desultory campaign went on with variable fortune, but the Americans pressed us severely, and we, the few regulars, were worn out with fatigue and annoyance. This was the state of affairs when a heavy fall of snow put an end to hostilities, as the curtain of a theatre might drop upon a battle scene. A space of enforced quiet succeeded. The roads were impassable, the drifts lay deep over the country, and we had for a time to contend with the intense cold, instead of a human foe. However, fuel abounded, provisions were plentiful, and the troops enjoyed their rest after the harassing marches and counter-marches of the past season.

My detachment was stationed at Port Hope, a little fresh-water harbour on the north bank of Lake Ontario. It consisted of a single company of my own regiment, a few artillerymen, and a handful of sappers under charge of an engineer officer. Captain Haworth, of our own corps, was in command, and I was his only effective subaltern; the ensign having been wounded and removed to the hospital at Quebec, just before the snow set in. I was then a lieutenant, and, although a young man, had been a lieutenant for some time, having been lucky enough to win my first promotion in Spain, within a few months after joining Lord Wellington's army. But I was eager, almost unreasonably eager, for further and speedy advancement: not from motives of merely selfish ambition, but because I had left a mother at home in England who was old and in narrow circumstances, as well as sisters who had stinted themselves of many comforts to furnish the outfit for my career.

Port Hope was at that time a sorry little place, with mean sheds and shanties, a few boarded houses roofed with glittering tin, and many log-huts little better than the wigwams of the savages. The few barges and coasting craft belonging to it were fast ice-bound in the little haven, surrounded by bavins and fenders made of pliant brushwood, to protect the timbers from the grinding and pressure of the jagged ice, when the thaw should come. There was a stockaded enclosure which was called the fort: a place originally constructed by the French masters of Canada; but it had never been fit for defence against any but a hostile party of Indians or scouts, and was decayed and ruinous. We had toiled hard to strengthen it, under the direction of the engineer officer, and what with logs, and puddled clay for mortar, and gabions, and sand-bags, and earthen ramparts built up before the iron ground refused to admit the spade, we had really succeeded in rearing a solid and imposing series of defences. As the massive flakes of snow darkened the air, we were just

finishing the embrasures, and we contrived to get the guns into position, swathing them with haybands and tarpaulin to preserve them from the weather.

Then our labours ceased. There was barrack-room drill, and nothing else, except a daily inspection of arms, and proper vigilance in posting and visiting sentries. But these precautions were regarded as hardly needful. The militiamen had been dismissed to their homes, and war slumbered. Great then was my surprise when, on my returning one evening from inspecting the sentries, Captain Haworth, wrapped in his cloak, met me with an unwonted look of trouble on his bronzed face.

"Ned, here's a precious business. Say nothing before the men, but go quietly up to my quarters. I'll join you in a moment."

The barrack-yard was half full: not merely of soldiers, their wives and children, but of settlers, country-folks, and miscellaneous hangers-on, white and black. Wondering what my commander could possibly have to communicate, I repaired to his quarters. In Haworth's sitting-room—for, as commander, he enjoyed the luxury of two rooms—a great fire of logs was burning, and before this fire, wrapped in a gaudy-coloured blanket, was an Indian asleep. The man's face was hidden by his arm, but his careless attitude and heavy breathing denoted fatigue, and his fringed leggings were wet and steaming, as if the frozen snow upon them had lately thawed. A plate, on which were some clean-picked bones and crumbs of bread, lay near, beside an empty tumbler, the latter of which exhaled an aromatic fragrance of whisky-and-water; a pair of snow-shoes had been tossed into a corner of the room.

I had barely time to take in all these objects at a glance, when Haworth entered, humming a tune, as if in lightness of heart. He was followed by his servant, with a fresh store of fire-wood.

"That will do, Martin; I shall want nothing more till nine. Mr. Mills sups with me, so you may grill the turkey legs as well as the other things I ordered. I'll brew the punch myself."

Martin made his military salute and departed. Instantly the captain's gaiety of manner fell like a mask.

"Ned Mills," said he, with unusual energy and seriousness, "I believe you're a true friend to me, and, Heaven help me, I want a friend this night, if ever a man wanted one since the world was a world."

I was a little startled by this preamble, but I lost no time in assuring him that my regard for him was genuine and of long date, and that I was ready to aid him in any way. "What was the matter?"

Haworth opened the door before replying, and glanced down the passage, to make sure no eavesdroppers were at hand; then gently closing the door, he said, in a low voice,

"Ned, this Indian runner has brought bad news. It is a lucky thing that he is a trust-

worthy fellow, and came straight to me instead of blabbing the secret at the canteen. The enemy are wide awake across the border; they hope to catch us napping."

"The enemy?" cried I, half-incredulously; "why, the roads are sealed up. The drifts are deep enough to smother twenty armies; not a gun, not a waggon, can get along through the loose snow, and the war must wait till there is a smooth hard surface for the march."

"What do you say to that? Is *that* smooth and hard enough?" said Haworth, pointing to the frozen surface of Lake Ontario, where a pale blue sheet of polished ice, striped with fleecy streaks of snow, reflected the countless stars of a Canadian night.

Haworth proceeded to tell me that a force of Americans, powerful in comparison with our feeble garrison, had secretly assembled on the south shore of the lake, and, led by experienced guides, designed to cross the ice, which was strong enough to bear the weight of a considerable body marching in Indian file, according to the custom of western guerilla warfare. The Indian who brought the news, and who had been sent by one of the spies in British pay whom our government then maintained on the frontier, had, by a prodigious effort, crossed the frozen lake on snow-shoes, without rest or refreshment, and had arrived an hour before. At the time of his setting out, there were many dangerous places not frozen over to a sufficient thickness, and there was every likelihood that several hours would elapse before the enemy began an advance, which they fully counted on as a surprise.

"Why, let them come," said I, cheerfully, and wondering at Haworth's face; "we've got the ramparts well finished, a stout palisade, and bastions that would not disgrace Quebec itself. We shall beat them off, and the repulse will be worth a step in the Army List to both of us."

Haworth shook his head.

"They won't come here; small as our fort is, they know it to be well armed and in good repair, and too hard a nut for them to crack. I forgot to tell you that the invading force will not consist of American regulars, but of twelve or fifteen hundred of the New York militia, under a notorious partisan, Colonel Carter—"

"Carter? You don't mean Jeremy Carter, the plundering rascal who was near being cashiered for his cruelty at Senetchwan, near Sandwich, where he burned the village?"

"I do mean him," said Haworth. "He is the most unscrupulous leader on the frontiers, but he is a daring dog, and is not unpopular with the mob of his native state. As I told you, he has under his command at least twelve hundred militiamen: not to mention a force of six hundred Mohawk Indians in the pay of Congress. And their destination is Hamilton."

This explained Haworth's unwonted emotion. In the fort of Hamilton, at the western extremity of the lake, was residing, as I well knew,

one very dear to him. Jane, Major Lee's only daughter, was affianced, with the full approval of her surviving parent, to Arthur Haworth, who was her cousin, and it was understood that their marriage was only deferred until my captain should be gazetted major. It was only natural that he should be alarmed by the prospect of a sudden attack upon the fort under Major Lee's command, the place being weak and the garrison slender.

"You see," said Haworth, "the general has been deceived by false reports, and has drawn away every available bayonet towards the Lower Province. Since the detachment of the Sixtieth were ordered off to Kingston, Lee has scarcely had men enough to mount guard and do fatigue work. And, depend on it, the Americans know well what a rich prize they will get, seeing that money, cannon, powder, and stores of all kinds are waiting there for transport to Toronto. The old major, you know, is as brave as a lion, but his resistance will probably lead to a massacre when the fort falls, and Carter is likely to have neither the will nor the power to restrain his savage allies, led as they are by Wild Cat, the very worst of the Mohawk nation. What can I do? Even if I dared abandon my post, to march the men to Hamilton is impossible, and Jane may perish while I am idling here."

Haworth was as gallant and good a fellow as any in our army, but he was utterly unmanned by the horrid vision his boding fancy had called up. I could not but own to myself, as I strove to comfort him, that he had reasons for his worst misgivings. But what could we do? Even supposing that my commanding officer could venture, at the risk of ignominious dismissal from the service, to abandon his post, our hundred and nine effectives could never cope with the superior numbers of the enemy; and the road was hopelessly impassable to any but the most adroit woodsman trained to snow-shoes. The lake presented a tempting expanse of flint-hard ice, but we knew that along the coast to the westward there were many spots where the flowing water from brook and creek had spoiled the uniformity of the surface: substituting rough "hummocks," cemented together by treacherous "glacière," for the firm and polished sheet that stretched away in front. A good many of our men were raw recruits from England, unused to ice, and certain to flounder and exhaust themselves in drifts of any depth, while only half a dozen of the old soldiers were even tolerable performers in snow-shoes. A rescue, therefore, seemed impossible.

"What on earth can I do?" said poor Haworth; "the major has not, to the best of my belief, sixty men under arms. The stockades are rotten, the earthworks are waiting till our sappers are at leisure to patch them up, and yet I know the stout old soldier won't surrender. His resistance will be just enough to rouse the devil in the hearts of those without; and when the Indians get at the spirit casks, who can tell what barbarous frenzy may take possession of their

wild minds. No use in tears and prayers when a drunken Mohawk sniffs blood and liquor!"

I made no reply for some minutes, for I was pondering over a plan that had occurred to me. Haworth waited awhile, and then peevishly asked why I did not answer?

"Look here, old fellow," said I, at last, "if we can't help them, the next best is to warn them. A good runner in snow-shoes might get to Hamilton in time, and perhaps they may have some communication open with the interior. If Major Lee thinks fit to hold out, he can at least send his daughter to a place of safety, and——"

"Do you imagine I haven't thought of that? But it's hopeless. There is not a scout at Port Hope now, there is not an Indian worth his salt; none but a parcel of worthless drunken redskins, who have been so corrupted by fire-water and lazy dependence on the whites that they couldn't get through such a march to save their lives. O Heaven, if they were all like Kesnakupak there——"

"Kesnakupak!" exclaimed I, casting a look at the sleeping Indian in his scarlet blanket before the fire; "do you mean that our fleet-footed messenger of evil is Elk-that-runs himself?"

I had never before seen that renowned personage, equally famous for his speed of foot and his extraordinary skill in the chase. In time of peace, this man, who was one of the petty chiefs of the Huron tribe, had been a favourite with the British officers, on account of the ability with which he guided them on hunting excursions; and since the war began, he had approved himself one of the most faithful and daring of our scouts.

The sound of his own name aroused the slumbering savage; he raised himself on his elbow, opened his black eyes, and growled out the deep guttural "Wagh!" of Indian surprise.

"Captain want Elk-that-runs?" he inquired.

"No, my poor fellow," said Haworth, kindly, "you have done enough for one while, and had better rest. I was but wishing I had as good a runner as you to send to Hamilton."

A long conversation ensued, in which the Indian bore his part; and as his intelligence and fidelity were well proved, Haworth spoke freely before him. Elk-that-runs understood English pretty well, though occasionally he begged that some puzzling expression might be translated into French, which tongue was generally familiar to the Hurons. Haworth frankly owned that he was afraid to ask counsel or help from the colonists around, many of whom were at that time disaffected, as being the sons or grandsons of the original French settlers, smarting under British rule. Then, as now, the bulk of the Canadians were loyal to our government; but there was a wide-spread leaven of discontent among those of French stock; and we had reason to suspect that all we did, was notified to the enemy.

"I dare not send down to the village to ask

for a messenger," said Haworth; "those two traitorous habitants, Duval and Fournier, are sure to hear of it, and to worm out the motive. North and west the people are staunch enough, but we have enemies here at our own doors. Except Kendal at the Big Lick——"

"I've got it," cried I, jumping up and clapping my hands—which drew from Elk-that-runs another "Wagh!" of grave astonishment. "Give me leave of absence for eight-and-forty hours at furthest, and, unless I much mistake the Kendal family, we'll pull through this awkward business yet."

After a few more words on both sides, my leave was granted me, and I wrapped myself in a buffalo robe, such as frontiersmen wore, to elude the recognition which might have proved untimely had I worn my military cloak, and set off through the piercing cold, to Big Lick farm. This farm was so called from the wide creek on whose banks it stood, and which was a favourite haunt of deer. It belonged to a most loyal emigrant family, whose children were growing up, healthy and prosperous, in the New World, but whose hearts were true to England and King George. The reason of my singling them out as recipients of my confidence was this:—Willy Kendal, a lad of seventeen, was the owner of the best and largest ice-boat on the whole Canada shore.

A special class of craft are those ice-boats, peculiar to Upper Canada, and their navigation requires an amount of skill and courage not every day to be found combined. They are barges or pinnaces, cutter-rigged for the most part, and built of the toughest timber the colony produces. Below the keel, is a raised runner of polished iron, sharp as a skate at the edges, and designed—not to plough the waters, but to skim across the ice of the great lakes. These craft are propelled by sails, and steered by helm, exactly like sea-going vessels; it is hardly necessary to add that with a favouring breeze they can attain a speed never equalled by a ship that has to cleave through water, and not much inferior to that of an express train. But they have the drawback of danger. So many accidents have occurred from the breaking in of the ice, from sudden squalls, collisions, and so forth, that these winter yachts have never attained the popularity of the safe and convenient sleigh.

It was a rough walk to Big Lick. More than once, in spite of all my caution, I plumped nearly waist deep into a bank of snow, and the loose drift was always up to my knees. But I pushed on, and presently found myself in the stove-heated "keeping room" of the Kendals, briefly telling my tale, and entreating assistance. A fine family group they made; the hale grey-haired father; Mrs. Kendal, a comely matron who had preserved her bright English complexion through many a Canadian summer; her daughters, of various ages, from infancy to nigh womanhood; and the frank bold Willy, with his blue eyes sparkling, and his sun-browned cheeks glowing with excitement, as he listened.

Hardly had I finished when he sprang up.

"Thank you, Mr. Mills, for thinking of me in such a muss. I'll just jump up stairs for my rifle and ball-pouch, and I'll get Stormswallow out of dock, and we'll make shift to lug her down creek. Once on the lake, she'll show her heels, I guess, and if we *do* meet those robbers and their red bloodhounds, why——"

Here he caught sight of his mother's wistful gaze fixed upon him; he stopped short.

Mrs. Kendal's first remark was not an unnatural one: "Suppose Willy should be killed!"

It was her husband who answered, and though there were tears in the old farmer's hardy eyes, his voice was firm as he said:

"Wife, we must not hold back our boy from a work of mercy. If I knew how to steer as he does, I'd go in his place, and take all risk, sooner than lie snug and warm in my bed, and leave women and young girls to the murdering tomahawk of the savage. But let our dear boy go, in God's name, and trust to the Heaven above us all to send him safe back to us."

So it was settled; but the parting was a painful one. The sisters clung, weeping, to Willy as he went to and fro, and though Mrs. Kendal kept her feelings down for a while, and made a mighty show of business equanimity in giving out blankets and hides, provisions, cordials, and other necessities, for the storing of the yacht during our wild trip, she broke down at last, and caught her son to her heart with a burst of passionate sobbing very painful to hear.

"Let the mistress have her cry out. It will do her good," whispered the old farmer. "You and I, lieutenant, will go down and get out the boat."

We went down, followed by two of the hired men, a negro and white, bending under the weight of our provisions and wrappings. With the help of these two men, we dragged the cutter from her miniature dock, got up her topmast, removed the tarpaulins, unlocked the cabin doors, bent the sails, and drew the light vessel to the frozen creek. Then Willy Kendal, his face stained with tears but flushed and eager with courage and hope, came up to us, with his gun on his shoulder, and his ammunition slung to his wampum-fringed belt.

"Aboard, if you please, Mr. Mills! We'll pull down the creek. Good-by, father. I'll soon be back. Cheer up mother and the girls. There's no danger."

Down the creek we slowly went, and by the soft light I could see the old farmer with his hat off, and his face turned up towards the bright starry Heavens, praying for the safety of his first-born.

Then we turned the corner, dark with maple-trees, and saw him no more. Willy gave me the needful instructions as to trimming the sails, while he grasped the helm. We were on the broad glassy lake, now ploughing through a seam of snow, now flitting lightly across a dark sheet of ice, polished and resonant as metal. The Stormswallow was a well-built boat, large, com-

modious, and swift. Willy Kendal, young as he was, had a very high reputation for skill in this peculiar and perilous navigation. He knew Ontario well, and had ranged its most distant waters scores of times. The light wind was tolerably favourable, and we were soon abreast of Port Hope, and showed a light three times, as I had concerted with my captain.

Presently a footstep was heard on the hard ice, and two muffled figures approached us. One was Haworth. The other was the Indian. In a moment they joined us.

"Thank you, Kendal, thank you, my brave lad," said Haworth; "and you, too, Mills. I'm no great hand at speeches; but if ever you want a friend, I owe you a debt a lifetime would be too short to pay. See, Mills! The Indian wants to go, tired as he is. He's a rare guide, and you may meet the enemy, and if so, his forest cunning may prove useful."

Elk-that-runs had by this time squatted himself on the deck, and was deftly proceeding to kindle his long pipe, the stem of which was of wild cherry, while the bowl was of soapstone from the western prairies. I pressed Haworth's hand once more, and we parted: he to plod his way back to shore: the crew of the Stormswallow to skim towards the west. We had to shape our course in a much more southerly direction than that in which Hamilton lay, to avoid weak places in the ice that would not have borne the weight of our vessel. Willy Kendal showed great adroitness in taking advantage of every puff of the light and fickle breeze, and I toiled to the best of my power to trim sail as he bade me; but our progress was not as fast as I could have desired. The cold, too, was bitter. In spite of our blanket-suits and robes, our fur-gloves and flapped caps of racoon-skin, we could hardly keep ourselves from stagnation of the blood, and our breath congealed in shaggy icicles on our wrappings of fur and woollen. For a time the boat glided on, ghost-like, over the smooth lake, under the pointed silvery stars; but presently a low sighing sound reached our ears, and a film like a black crape veil began to draw across the spangled dark-blue sky.

"A snow-squall comin' up!" said young Kendal.

Lashing the tiller, to keep the boat's head right, he sprang to help me in reducing sail. Just as we had got the cutter under a modicum of canvas, the sigh of the wind swelled into a roar, and Willy caught the helm while a whirling dash of snow-flakes reached us, whitening our decks, and the wind made us heel over perilously.

"We must let her run before it," said Willy; and in a moment we were rushing over the frozen lake at such a speed as I had never dreamed of, and which realised the hackneyed comparison of arrow-swift. On we went, lashed by the hissing gale and driving snow: the ice and the land and the sky equally hidden from our sight by the dazzling thickness of the shower of whirling flakes. There was something weird and

unearthly in such headlong blind speed through such weather.

"The Labrador folks are plucking their geese some," observed Willy Kendal; "we're most smothered with the feathers."

I could not help smiling, though there was, in truth, good cause for being serious. The winter had set in too recently for the ice to have attained that comfortable "two yard" thickness in which Canadians delight. There were places where it groaned and quivered, bending like a floor of springy planks; there were other places where small gaps or cracks intervened, causing the Stormswallow to rock and reel as she flew over the dangerous spot like a hunter over a ditch. To lie to was now impossible, and while the furious squall lasted we were hurried along, without seeing a yard ahead of us. Presently the gale subsided, or more probably passed on towards the Upper Lakes, and we saw the snow-clouds break and scatter, and the bright stars glimmer overhead. The wind became moderate, and the cutter was once more under control.

"Where are we?" was my first inquiry.

My young companion looked around with a puzzled air.

"Crimp me like a shadfish if I can tell you, Mr. Mills! Better ask old beads and blankets there. Indians have the eyes of cats."

Elk-that-runs, who had not said one word since we started, but had gravely kept his pipe alight through the elemental strife, composedly made answer to my inquiry:

"Pale chief no can see? Dat (pointing over his shoulder) Bald Point, dere, lower down, is Voyageurs' Spit, where trees, and light you take for star, Hamilton."

"That beats all," cried Willy. "I thought I knew old Ontario a few, but the redskin whips me clean. See, lieutenant, there is the Spit, with something waving that may be trees, or may be feathers, for anything I can tell from here; but the Indian's right. Yon is Hamilton, though how we've run the distance in the time I can't guess. That puff of wind was some pumpkins!"

Hamilton it really was, to our great joy, and in about half an hour we were within a short distance of the shore, and heard the hail of a sentry, "Who goes there?"

Of course I had not the countersign, but replying "A friend," I jumped out upon the ice, and approached the sentry: opening my wraps to show my uniform. Thus I managed to be passed on to the guard-house, and thence to the commandant's quarters. By this time the stars were getting pale, and there was an intense chill in the air, and a grey tinge in the eastern sky that heralded the dawn. Major Lee was aroused from sleep, and came down half-dressed to meet me. The fine old soldier exhibited unusual emotion and discomposure when he learned my tidings.

"The defences are in wretched condition, by no fault of mine," said he. "It is in vain that I have urged them for months, at head-quarters,

to spare us guns and engineers. But I don't mean to yield, Mr. Mills, on the first summons, I can assure you."

"I should be sorry to recommend such a step," said I; "and yet, major, this is one of those cases in which courage can hardly avail much. The Americans know your weakness, be assured, and their own strength. They are no clement conquerors, and their Mohawk allies are under no sort of discipline. If the fort should be stormed—"

"There it is, sir," said the old officer, pacing up and down the room in considerable agitation. "I am sorry for the poor fellows who wear the king's cloth, but they and I are soldiers, and must take our chance. But my daughter and my sister—and yet I have no means of sending them away. The roads are deep with mountains of drifted snow; no sleigh could run, no horse could struggle through. They would perish long before they were in sight of Toronto."

A bright idea flashed upon me.

"Major, you forget the Stormswallow. She will carry several persons, and Willy Kendal and the Indian guide can make shift to navigate her back to Port Hope. Put your daughter on board her, put Mrs. Harrison on board, put every soldier's wife and child on board, and let them trust to Providence and the care of my comrades. I can then stop here. You won't be sorry to have an extra man, and we'll endeavour, by hook or by crook, to give a warm reception to the enemy."

An animated though brief debate followed. Major Lee readily consented to my first proposal, but he would not hear of my remaining.

"You *must* go," said he. "Remember, I commit my daughter and her aunt to your care, and you are responsible to me for their security. A pretty thing, that I should suffer you to stop here and get knocked on the head, when you don't even belong to the regiment, and when your leave is only for eight-and-forty hours! As commandant of Fort Hamilton I order you, sir, to return to Port Hope—and no more words about it, my dear boy. My heart will be lighter when the women are gone, and perhaps I may think of some plan for checkmating the assailants."

The major was obliged to use both authority and persuasion to induce his daughter to leave him in peril. She clung to his side, wound her arms round his neck, and adjured him to let her stay, or to go with her—a thing, of course, impossible to be done without a breach of duty, which the veteran would not have been guilty of to save his life a score of times. Luckily, Mrs. Harrison, the aunt, was animated by her own fears into acting with the energy of selfishness, and she assisted in almost forcing the weeping girl on board the ice boat. With them went a negro woman servant, Susannah by name, and five soldiers' wives, their frightened children holding to their skirts. Two of these women were very reluctant to leave their husbands, but motherly apprehensions for the safety of their children when the Mohawks should win the fort, prevailed at last. The soldiers behaved very well

and very gallantly, as soldiers usually do when they respect their commander. They were left to face cruel odds and a merciless foe, and they knew it; but no voice was raised for flight, though there was just a chance of escape on foot over the ice. They eagerly aided the females to embark, and stood around, prepared for the worst. Willy Kendal got the yacht's head round to the south-east, and amid wild outbursts of grief from those we were taking away, and many a cheer and hearty blessing from the brave fellows left behind, we glided off across the glassy ice, and heard the last English hurrah die away behind us.

It was now dawn, but the sun was hidden by thick grey clouds, and a dull mist, through which the familiar headlands of the coast loomed gigantic, until we lost them too, and trusted to the compass for our guide. The ladies were put in possession of the cabin, the stove was lighted, and such few preparations as we could make for their comfort were made. The soldiers' wives and their children crouched on the deck forward, and we were sorely put to it to provide the poor things with warm clothing to defend them from the piercing cold.

Three hours after daybreak it was still very foggy and dark. We were far out on the lake—at that part very narrow—and within sight, no doubt, if the weather had been clear, of the American shore. The women and children were fretful and low spirited. Miss Lee had covered her face with a shawl, and lay in a corner of the cabin, in an agony of speechless sorrow, and not answering a word to the voluble talk of her rather empty-headed aunt: a fussy worldly personage, who thought she had laid her brother the major under immense obligations by coming out, when her husband died insolvent, to share his home in Canada.

"Kendal," said I, "we're very much south of Port Hope; can't we bear up a bit?"

But the young colonist pointed out to me how very unstable and light the wind was, constantly veering from point to point, and always unfavourable to a direct course. He also told me, in a whisper, that there were "seams" in the ice, and he only hoped we should not come to "cl'ar water" presently.

It might have been half an hour after this when Susannah, the negress, as she came up from the tiny cabin, suddenly started and cried out,

"O massa, we 'rived! Poor 'Sannah see bay'net of sodger shine, dar."

She pointed south, where something shone through the fog.

"Wagh!" grunted Elk-that-runs, rising to his feet with the noiseless agility of a panther. "Kesnakupak blind squaw—deaf stupid Indian—let listen a bit."

He put his head on one side, and listened like a stag for the hunters. Then he drew himself up, folded his arms—naked but for the heavy silver bracelets on his medalled breast—and said:

"Men talk—Mohawk—out yonder."

"Impossible!" cried Kendal and I, with one accord.

"Elk-that-runs speak truth," answered the Indian, stoically. "Some talk English talk, dem Yankee soldier—some talk Mohawk—dem warriors of de Six Nations. Dat all."

"Hist!" cried Willy, very cautiously.

A shrill quavering sound reached our ears through the mist, and we recognised an American air, though the words could not be distinguished. At the same moment the curtain of fog lifted sufficiently to enable us to discern a sight appalling enough under the circumstances. A small sandy islet, specked with trees, visible above the ice, and on it and around it the temporary encampment of a large body of armed men. No tents, but many a rude "lodge" of skins and branches, while a number of hand-sleighs, probably containing provisions and ammunition, were scattered about. Most of those in sight were white men, of whom the majority wore the uniform of the New York militia, though many were in the fringed hunting-shirts or the suits of blanketing commonly worn in winter by the dwellers in Oswego county. There were a number of grim forms whose paint and fantastic head-gear of plumes and fox-tails, whose buffalo-robos and gaudy-coloured blankets, sufficiently denoted their stock. I saw no cannon, but bayonets glanced far and near, and the bright barrels of muskets and the clouded tubes of rifles bristled on all sides.

"We've poked our heads into a wild bees' nest, lieutenant," whispered the brave young Kendal. "Our best hope is, that the fog may fall again."

But a sudden yell from some sharp-eyed Indian announced that we were seen. Hundreds of voices took up the cry, and a huge clamour and confusion began. Rallying squares were formed by the Americans, while the savages huddled together in dusky groups.

"Hurrah! I see how 'tis," cried Willy Kendal; "the scamps think we're Britishers coming over to attack 'em. They're that struok of a heap, we might gain a couple of mile before a shot's fired, if—"

Flash! A rifle had been fired at us already, and the ball was so well aimed that it cut one of the feathers from the head-dress of Elk-that-runs, and sent it fluttering to the deck. The chief never moved a muscle, but sucked on at his pipe, and waited a full minute before he uttered his eternal "Wagh!"

But after this tribute to the etiquette of his stoical race, the intelligent savage proved anything but a drone in the hive. While Willy clutched the helm, and I did my best to trim sails and haul ropes so as to make the most of the sluggish breeze, the Indian rose to his feet, cast a piercing glance at the enemy, and then stood beside young Kendal, perfectly regardless of repeated discharges of fire-arms.

"Ice no good, dere!" cried Elk-that-runs. "More to east, young chief. Tell you, current dar, and you no sheer off we break through and all lose scalp, sure."

Indeed, Kendal had but just time, by a sharp jerk of the helm, to avoid a sheet of weak "cat-ice" that glittered diamond bright in the rays of the dim wintry sun, and one plunge into which would have been fatal.

Elk-that-runs showed wonderful knowledge of the lake in that part, and, thanks to him, we avoided more than one shoal and more than one unsafe place, while the brave lad and his swift boat both did their best.

But the wind was faint and unsteady, the Stormswallow was heavily laden, and her progress was sorely unlike the lightning rush of the preceding voyage. We were chased hotly. I cannot tell whether the enemy guessed whence we came, but they spared no effort to overtake us, and while nearly two hundred joined the pursuit, about thirty of the fleetest gained on us terribly fast. Of those, about one-third were New Yorkers, the most being Mohawks; but all bore rifles, and frequently halted to fire. We were obliged to place the women and children under cover by crowding them into the cabin, and as to ourselves, we crouched down as we listened, under cover of the bulwarks.

"If the wind would but freshen!" said I.

Willy Kendal shook his head. Our pursuers were gaining on us. They came on in straggling disorder, white men and red men, pell-mell. Most of the Indians wore snow-shoes, which helped them well across the patches of loose deep snow; but the New Yorkers, in their "crampponed" shoes, made better way across the polished ice.

"Hilloa! Britisher, give in! You'd best!" bawled a threatening voice in our rear, half drowned by the whoops of the Mohawks.

"Surrender there!" cried another panting American. "We'll make short finish of the hull lot of you, once ye pull trigger!"

For Elk-that-runs had thrust the short clouded barrel of his rifle over the taffrail. I struck it up.

"No need to throw away a shot," said I; "besides, they are an overmatch. Ten to one. We had best make terms."

"Terms, lieutenant?" said young Kendal, bitterly; "the Yankees may promise, but the Mohawks ain't easy to choke off. Fight or yield, they won't spare us—and, may I never, but the wind's down!"

Too true. A sullen flapping of our sails announced that it was too true, and the Stormswallow only glided along under the influence of the momentum she had acquired. The Indians set up a long exulting whoop, like hounds when the chase is well-nigh over, and came on.

"Let us die like men, anyway!" cried Willy Kendal, catching up his gun: a motion which I half mechanically imitated. But at this instant Elk-that-runs let his own piece drop to the

deck, and uttered a strange chuckle as he pointed with his tawny finger to the ice, and bent his head to listen.

A groaning sound, like the complaint of a tortured giant, came to our ears. Then the ice heaved, and a sharp detonation, like the crack of a hundred muskets, resounded. And then, with crack and roar, a long fissure opened through the gleaming sheet of dark blue, as if it were cloven by some mighty stroke. Seam after seam, chasm after chasm, burst through the frozen surface, and then, with a dull bellowing noise, louder than that of many heavy cannon, a huge mass of ice broke up into glittering fragments, that churned the water into foam, or slowly revolved, rising like jagged walls into the air.

Between us and the enemy extended this impassable barrier, and we knew that we were saved. We saw several of our pursuers, both Indians and whites, toss up their arms with a wild cry of despair, as the ice broke beneath their feet, sucking them down into the depths below, and settling above them as they sank. The Stormswallow was still on a firm surface, seventy yards from the edge of the shivered ice. By dint of poling for an hour, we made some progress, until a breeze sprung up which carried us, before night, to Port Hope.

The cracking of the ice preserved Hamilton, for it continued at intervals on the American side of the Lake for two days, and Colonel Carter was compelled by the clamours of his men to give up his expedition and regain the shore. The general in command was kind enough to forward home a favourable account of my conduct in volunteering to carry news to Fort Hamilton, and six months afterwards Captain Mills and his young friend Willy Kendal had the pleasure of being present when Arthur Haworth was married to Miss Jane Lee.

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